DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 397 544 EA 027 940

AUTHOR Rutherford, Barry; And Others
TITLE Parent and Community Involvement in Education. Volume I: Findings and Conclusions. Studies of Education Reform.
INSTITUTION RMC Research Corp., Denver, CO.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 95
CONTRACT RR91172008
NOTE 146p.; For Volumes I-III of this particular study, see EA 027 940-942. For documents related to this study, see ED 368 511-512. For all 12 final reports (36 volumes) in this series of studies, see EA 027 926-961.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Change; *Family School Relationship; Intermediate Grades; Middle Schools; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; Partnerships in Education; Program Effectiveness; *School Community Relationship; School Restructuring
IDENTIFIERS *Studies of Education Reform (OERI)

ABSTRACT

Genuine educational reform depends on developing relationships with the home, community groups, politicians, and the business community (Seeley, 1981). This volume is the first of three volumes that are products of a 3.5 year study of education reform, with a focus on the role of parent, family, and community involvement in the middle grades. The study sought to identify barriers to and incentives for reforming parent and community involvement in middle-grade education; effective implementation strategies; and the source, nature, and content of information that affects the reform of parent-community involvement. The study focused on comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement programs, school restructuring, and school-initiated adult-child learning programs. This volume summarizes the research literature, presents the results of visits to each of nine sites as case summaries, and provides cross-narrative findings. Visits were made to nine middle-grade sites during the 1993-94 school year. The study targeted the following areas for study: program context, planning and design, current implementation, support systems, and outcomes. School districts and schools that were undergoing middle-grade reform constructed the meaning of reform through stakeholder participation; held strong visions and deep understandings of the change process; established strong policies that supported reform efforts; viewed the school as a community; and sometimes acted out political struggles in the school-reform arena. Outcomes for students included a strong relationship between school/family partnerships and improved student achievement; positive relationships and attitudes about schools, teachers, their families, and the community. Outcomes for parents and families included increased knowledge and skills; and positive attitudes about teachers and schools; closer connections with the school and the curriculum; and the creation of new roles for involvement in their students' learning. Teachers experienced strong connections with families of students and new facilitator roles. Schools garnered an increase in parent, family, and community involvement and increased support for school-reform efforts. Finally, investment in human resources, rather than "more-is-better" spending was the most efficient way to support school-family and community partnerships. (Contains 157 references and a 17-item bibliography of current products.) (LMI)

ED 397 544

STUDIES OF EDUCATION REFORM: PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT
VOLUME I

Findings and Conclusions

1995

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

By:

Barry Rutherford
Beckie Anderson
Shelley Billig

RMC Research Corporation

EA 027 940

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

This volume is one of three that are the culmination of a three and one-half year study of education reform, and specifically, the role of parent, family, and community involvement in the middle grades. The study addressed how school districts have provided opportunities for parents and families to be involved in education reform that benefits all children; how parents, families, and communities are involved in the restructuring of middle grade education; and school-initiated activities that promote interaction between adults and students in their home settings. The study was carried out by RMC Research Corporation, under contract with the Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education.

In this volume, we summarize the current state-of-the-art, present the results of visits to each of nine sites as case summaries, and provide a cross-case narrative that analyzes our findings across all sites in terms of the issues that emerged from our site visits. The volume concludes with sections on the impact of reform efforts on outcomes for schools, practitioners, parents, and students; an assessment of the resources needed to carry out reform efforts; and implications for policy, practice, and future research. Data for the study were collected during the 1993-94 school year.

In subsequent volumes we provide detailed case studies for each site, and our research design and methodology.

The conduct of this study and the preparation of this report were sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, under Contract No. RR91-1720.08 (Oliver Moles, Project Officer). Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Education. Nor do the examples included herein imply judgment by the Department or the contractor regarding the quality or status of the program.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Executive Summary i

Preface xi

Acknowledgments xiii

Chapter

ONE SUMMARY REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE 1

Chapter 1: Overview of the Summary Literature Review 1
  Purposes 1
  Definitions 2
  Criteria for Selection and Inclusion 2
  Limitations of the Review 3
  Guiding Questions 3
  Overview of the Chapters 4
Chapter 2: The Context of Parent and Community Involvement Programs 5
  Overview 5
  The Policy Environment 6
  Trends and Factors Influencing Parent and Community Involvement Programs 8
    Diversity Within Systems 9
    Perceptions, Attitudes, and Beliefs 10
    Institutional Settings 11
    Pre-Adolescent/Adolescent Development 12
    Expectations, Attitudes, and Beliefs 12
  Summary 13
Chapter 3: The Development and Implementation of Parent and Community Involvement Programs 15
  Overview 15
  Overarching Roles of Parents, Families, and Community Members in the Development and Implementation of Programs 16
    Parents as a Primary Resource in the Education of their Children 16
    Parents and Community Members as Supporters and Advocates for the Education of their Children 19

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Page

Chapter

ONE SUMMARY REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE (continued)

Chapter 3 (Continued)
Parents and Community Members as Participants in the Education of all Children 21
Key Program Elements That Cut Across Programs at All Levels 22
Resources Needed to Develop, Implement, and Sustain Parent and Community Involvement Programs 24
Summary 25
Chapter 4: The Impact of Parent and Community Involvement Programs 27
Overview 27
The Impact of Parent and Community Involvement Programs 28
Summary 29
Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations 31
Overview 31
Conclusions 32
Implications 32
Recommendations for Future Research 34

TWO STUDY AIMS AND STUDY QUESTIONS 37

Study Aims 37
Study Questions:
Comprehensive Districtwide Parent and Community Involvement 38
School Restructuring and Parent Involvement 40
Adult-Child Learning Programs (Home Learning) 42

THREE CASE STUDY SUMMARIES 45

Comprehensive Districtwide Programs
Fort Worth Independent School District
Fort Worth, TX 47
Jefferson County Public Schools
Louisville, KY 51
Minneapolis Public Schools
Minneapolis, MN 55

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Page

Chapter

THREE CASE STUDY SUMMARIES (continued)

School Restructuring

Beck Middle School
Georgetown, SC 59
Lamoni Middle School
Lamoni, IA 63
Shelburne Middle School
Shelburne, VT 65

Adult-Child Learning Programs (Home Learning)

Community School District No. 3
New York City, New York 67
Natchez-Adams School District
Natchez, MS 69
Rochester City School District
Rochester, New York 71

FOUR CROSS SITE ANALYSIS: REFORMING SCHOOLS, TRANSFORMING PARTNERSHIPS 75

Introduction 77
Eight Themes of Middle Grade Parent, Family, and Community Involvement 78
Reform as a Context for Middle Grade Partnerships........ 79
The Eight Themes 81
Conclusion 96

FIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE REFORMS........ 97

Introduction 97
Outcomes for Students 98
Outcomes for Parents 99
Outcomes for Teachers 101
Outcomes for Schools 101
Outcomes for Communities 102
Institutionalization of Programs 103
Conclusion 103

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Page

SIX ASSESSMENT OF THE RESOURCES REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT THE REFORMS 105

Introduction 105
Fiscal Resources 105
Human Resources 108
Conclusion 109

SEVEN IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE 111

Introduction 111
Implications for Policy 111
Implications for Practice 112
Conclusion 114

EIGHT IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH 115

Introduction 115
Implications 116
Conclusion 117

Appendix

A References 119

B Bibliography of Current Products 133

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why study parent, family, and community involvement in the middle grades?

The educational partnerships described in Goals 2000: Educate America Act, plus the growing number of state initiatives and mandates related to parent, family, and community involvement, provide a climate of increased attention to the meaningful involvement of parents and the community in education at the state and local levels. In order to document and analyze useful practices for educational reform, this study looked at more than 25 years of research in parent and community involvement and the outcomes of state and local initiatives and mandates.

To be helpful to policymakers, practitioners, and planners, including school staff, parents, families, and community members, the study addressed research aspects of three cross-cutting reform themes in the area of middle grade school/family and community partnerships:

- What are the larger and local environments within which parent, family, and community involvement operate? How do these contextual factors influence those programs? For example, are there federal, state, or local policies which potentially impede the implementation of quality middle grade parent, family, and community involvement in education?
- What are the roles that parent, families, and community and business members assume in the education of their children? How are these roles facilitated? What key elements are specific to these areas? What key elements cut across all areas? What key resources are needed to design, develop, implement, and sustain these roles?
- What are the effects of promising programs on parents, students, school staff, schools, school districts, and the community? How are these effects assessed or determined?

These themes were incorporated into the examination of quality parent, family, and community involvement across three research focus areas:

- comprehensive districtwide programs;
- school restructuring to facilitate partnerships that benefit students; and
- adult-child learning programs (home learning).

What does the literature say about the three cross-cutting themes?

Context. Partnerships and programs operate within the rich contextual environment of schools and school districts. The literature reveals that these contextual factors serve as parameters within which school/family and community partnerships function. Four levels of policy influence and inform these partnerships:

- School policies that exist as "stand alone" documents, or policies that are subsumed under a larger district policy framework;
- District policies, often linked to state and federal initiatives, that support school/family and community partnerships;
- State policies that reflect the urgency to use the resources of home and community to ensure student success; and
- Federal policies that provide a template for other efforts that are intended to guarantee the involvement of parents, families, and communities in schooling.

Across all levels and organizational structures of schooling, the literature identifies two factors that either positively or negatively influence school/family and community partnerships: diversity within systems; and perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs of the stakeholders in reform. At least three factors directly affect middle grade school, family, and community partnerships: institutional settings; pre-adolescent/adolescent development; and expectations, attitudes, and beliefs of practitioners and schools.

Roles for parents, families, and community members. Parents, family members, and community members can assume specific roles as they become involved in the education of their children, for example as volunteers in classrooms (see Epstein, 1995). The literature reveals three over-arching roles for parents: parents as the primary resource in the education of their children; parents and community members as supporters and advocates for the education of their children; and parents and community members as participants in the education of all children.

Home learning best exemplifies the roles parents and family members can play as a primary resource in education. Key program elements that are specific to home learning include well-developed local practices; a willingness of teachers to build on parent/family strengths; ongoing recruitment using multiple methods; effective strategies that promote home learning; and the home learning environment.

Site-based school restructuring facilitates parents' and community members' roles as advocates and supporters. School restructuring activities focus on an emphasis on quality education; family and community participation; and site-based management.

Districtwide programs provide the vehicle for parents and community members to be involved in roles that reach beyond the immediate impact of an individual child to the impact on all children in the district. Key program elements here include: development and implementation of policy; embracing the diversity of families and communities; and a focus on linkages with the community and other agencies.

Program elements that cut across all levels of the education system. There are three key program elements evident in the literature that involve all levels of the education system:

- Communication is the primary building block that takes into account the participation of all participants;
- Key players that include students, parents, families, community members, teachers, and other school personnel; and
- Resources such as research findings, funding, personnel, and professional development.

Effects of promising programs. While establishing strong claims about the outcomes of any program is possible in other situations and circumstances, it is usually not possible in studies of educational programs. Most often the outcomes, or effects, of educational programs are the result of the interaction of many complex variables. Because the interactive nature of these variables is elusive, the ability to make definitive statements about effects is problematic. However, considerable research establishes an associative link, or correlation between school efforts to create partnership and outcomes for students, parents, school personnel, and schools and school districts.

- School and parent/family/community partnerships are associated with positive effects on **student outcomes**, e.g., higher levels of achievement as measured by standardized test scores; factual, conceptual, critical, and attitudinal aspects of learning (Eccles and Harold, 1993).
- Acquisition of new skills, increased involvement, interaction with their children, and positive self-concept are examples of **parent outcomes** associated with school/family partnerships.
- **Teacher outcomes** associated with partnerships included positive attitudes, the use of varied strategies, and an increased sense of self-efficacy.
- Positive effects for **schools and school districts** were found through the partnerships schools forge with parents/families/communities. An increase in student attendance rates; reductions in dropout, delinquency, and pregnancy rates; and improved discipline practices were associated with these partnerships.

What are the findings of the study across cases?

During the spring and summer of 1994, we visited each of nine sites two times. Sites chosen for comprehensive districtwide programs included Fort Worth Independent School District, Fort Worth, TX; Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY; and Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis MN. School restructuring sites were Beck Middle School, Georgetown, SC; Lamoni Middle School, Lamoni, IA; and Shelburne Middle School, Shelburne, VT. Sites visited for adult-child learning programs included: Community School District Number 3, New York City, NY; Natchez-Adams Parent Center, Natchez, MS; and Rochester Public Schools, Rochester, NY. Through semi-structured interviews, observations of programs in operation, and collection of documents related to middle grade school/family and community partnerships, we first prepared a data reduction guide using research questions developed for each research strand. From the data reduction guide we prepared case studies for each site in the form of narrative reports. We analyzed and synthesized the findings from each of the case study narratives into a cross-case narrative.

In the process of distilling the themes from our cases, we learned a great deal about educational reform. Our analysis of reform as a context for school, family, and community partnerships revealed the following:

- **There are five common characteristics of school districts and schools that are in the process of reform:**
    - the meaning for reform is constructed as stakeholders participate in the process;
    - successful reform initiatives are guided by a strong vision of what students and the school district or school should "look like," and are grounded in a deep understanding of the change process;
    - strong policies support reform efforts;
    - the school is viewed as a "community;" and
    - school reform is often an arena for political struggle.

Across all nine cases, eight primary themes emerged:

- **The critical nature of the middle grades.** Although the middle years are often characterized as a period of transition, most of the middle grade practitioners we talked with indicated that the middle grades are much more than a simple transition from elementary school to high school. In fact most talked about the middle grades as a "watershed" in education. During the middle grades that parents and other family members often look to the school for help in dealing with personal and educational choices, and adolescent behavior. Although there are differences in intra-family personal conflict during adolescence, all families have concerns around finding a balance between independence and autonomy for the adolescent, and helping their child make appropriate educational choices. Students expressed a desire to be independent, yet the commonly held belief that adolescents do not want their parents and families to be involved in their education was not supported. However , the nature of parent/family involvement may need to change during the middle grade years. Community and business leaders expressed a desire to be involved in partnerships with schools that allow students to experience the "real world of work" and the responsibilities of participating in community life.

- **Challenges can create opportunities for family involvement**. Changes during adolescence, and changes in the organization and curriculum of middle grade schools pose formidable challenges for partnerships. We also found that they simultaneously created opportunities for parent and family partnerships with the schools. Schools find new ways to communicate with parents and families and transform organizational and curricular challenges into opportunities for new and unique partnerships. Parents and families find new roles in middle grade schools and, as advocates, accept greater responsibilities, not only for their own children, but also for children throughout the school.
- **Strong relationships form the core of family and community involvement**. Schools are an ideal context for developing and fostering strong relationships. Students reported that their middle grade teachers and school personnel are interested in them -- both as students, and as growing and maturing young people. Parents are most comfortable in forming partnerships with the school when there has been personal, one-on-one contact with someone from the school (a teacher, parent liaison or others) or with other middle grade parents and family members. Teachers told us that their work is most rewarding when they have time to help students on an individual basis.

- **Shared responsibility and decision making.** During the middle grades, relationships change between children and parents and families, between students and teachers, and between young people and their communities. The middle grades are also a time when responsibilities and decision making change, not only for middle grade students, but also for school personnel, parents and families, and the community at large. Home, school, and community are the places where middle grade students learn and are actively involved. Students expressed a desire for independence and wanted more control over the decisions that they make. At the same time, we found that students (especially young adolescents) were not always cognizant of the relationship between their decision making and the attendant consequences of those decisions. A constant challenge to middle grade school/family and community partnerships is coordinating information and efforts around all players to create a whole picture of the student. Each of our respondents, in some way, expressed that they know only a part of each student's life, but few said that they know the "total" child. These partnerships can help to construct a picture of the entire scope of middle grade student needs and inform the decisions made by each participant.
- **Sustained family and community involvement depends on active advocacy by leaders.** A key factor in the successful schools and programs that we visited was leadership. All of the middle grade principals viewed themselves as instructional leaders within their schools and as leaders in their communities. We found that leaders in school districts and schools were the primary persons who set the tone for parent, family, and community involvement. Although we found that many people were involved in most of the partnerships we observed, the leader was usually credited with having a primary and essential role in establishing and sustaining the partnerships. In addition to the leadership in schools and schools districts, we also found that community members, business leaders can also function in leadership roles. Throughout our site visits we found instances where community and business leaders had major responsibilities in school decision making and reform efforts.
- **Support systems.** Active partnerships between middle grade schools and parents, families, and communities require a system of supports to sustain them. The most

frequently mentioned supports were financial resources, human resources, professional development, and the ability and authority to make decisions.

- **Connections to the curriculum.** Sites participating in reform efforts recognize the core role of curriculum and instruction. In the majority of our sites, the strategies to connect middle grade parents and family members generally remains the responsibility of individual teachers.
- **Connections to the community.** In our sites, successful partnerships were characterized by a strong connection with the community. School leaders and their staff understood that as geographic boundaries broaden at the middle grades (often through a feeder school concept, desegregation order, or schools-of-choice), so did the responsibilities broaden to understand the community. This is especially true in areas where diverse, multiethnic, and multiracial school populations bring unique strengths. In more successful partnerships, the idea of a "melting pot" - where all students assimilate to the standards dictated by the principal's and teacher's culture, race and class - has been replaced by a celebration of the diversity that students, parents and families, and the community bring to the school.

What are the outcomes of school/family and community partnerships in the middle grades?

We developed five categories of outcomes of school/family and community partnerships. These five categories were: outcomes for students, parents and families, schools, communities, and institutionalization of programs. It should be noted that the following outcomes are ones that were reported in interviews with key respondents during our site visits. The outcomes are, therefore, conditional in nature and reflect general trends within sites. Not all sites reported each outcome that we list here. In the absence of a study designed to compare carefully controlled groups, no inference should be made as to the strength of the outcome.

Outcomes for students included a strong relationship between school/family partnerships in the middle grades and improved student achievement; positive relationships and attitudes about schools, teachers, their families, and the community. Outcomes for parents and families included: increased knowledge and skills; positive attitudes about teachers and schools; closer connections with the school and the curriculum; and the creation of new roles for involvement in their student's learning. Positive outcomes for teachers were found in stronger connections with the families of the students they taught, and new roles as facilitators as they made daily decisions about student learning and connections with resources to support families. School outcomes included increased parent, family, and community involvement. Additionally, schools found that strong partnerships increased support for school reform efforts. Community involvement in reform resulted in stronger connections with schools, and the creation of roles as leaders in reform initiatives. Institutionalization of school/family partnerships is evident when program leadership advocates for these partnerships, where policies support partnerships, and where there is historical precedence for partnership efforts. Under these conditions, schools and districts are more likely to support middle grade school/family partnerships by providing and/or continuing human and fiscal resources.

What resources are necessary to sustain active middle grade school/family and community partnerships?

Our research did not indicate that "more is better" in terms of fiscal support for school/family and community partnerships. The common denominator across all programs was the provision of human resources to deal with family and community issues. Investment in human resources may afford the greatest return for establishing and maintaining school/family and community partnerships.

What are the implications of this study for policy and practice?

Implications for policy and policymakers include a focus on success for all students as the core of policy for education reform, policies as a support for school/family and community partnerships at all levels, flexible policies that take into account the contexts within which school/family partnerships operate, and the key role of policy in the provision of both fiscal and non-fiscal resources to sustain school/family and community partnerships in the middle grades.

Implications for practice include finding multiple ways for parents, families, and the community to be involved in reform efforts; establishing support systems to sustain school/family partnerships and overcome challenges; communicating frequently and thoughtfully with partners; allowing students to be co-constructors in home learning activities; disseminating information about promising and effective practices and programs to end-users; and evaluating the impact of school/family and community partnership reform efforts early and often.

Finally, what future research is needed for middle grade school/family and community partnerships, and education reform efforts?

Our conceptual framework, which included program context, planning, design, and implementation, challenges, supports, and outcomes remains the framework around which we build our questions for future research. Future research, we feel, should focus on developing an holistic picture of school/family and community partnerships. Considering all of the pieces of the framework, their interplay and interaction, will further our understanding of how these partnerships are established and sustained.

Conclusion

Effective practices and programs for involving parents, families, and communities - in partnership with schools - do exist. While there are many challenges to be faced, the nine sites that we studied offer the promise of success. Education in the United States is at a crossroads. Success or failure may depend on our ability to join together as partners in reform to ensure success for all children now and in future generations.

PREFACE

Overview. In April 1991 the United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) issued a Request for Proposals for twelve studies that focus on nationally significant recent education reform and restructuring efforts across the country. The fundamental purpose of each of these studies is to document and analyze promising and successful models and practices that others can learn from or emulate as they seek to reform American education. Based on existing data, the studies examine the impact of the reforms, particularly the impact on students, and especially the impact on student learning. What was expected of the reform? What has it accomplished?

In September 1991 RMC Research Corporation was awarded the contract to study parent and community involvement in education, emphasizing programs at the middle grades (grades 6-8), as one of the twelve studies of educational reform. Three aspects of parent and community involvement in education were the focus of this study: comprehensive districtwide efforts to involve parents, families, and community members in the education of all children; parent and community involvement in the restructuring of middle grade education; and the involvement of parents and families through interactive activities at home that support learning in school.

Scope of the work. This volume of the Final Technical Report represents a synthesis of two major tasks undertaken during the study. First, a summary review of the research and practice literature on parent and community involvement related to the middle grades is presented. The literature review (see Rutherford, Billig & Kettering, 1992) assisted us as we refined our research plan. It also provided the basis for the second task - fieldwork - that was carried out in nine sites across the United States.

During the spring and summer of 1994, researchers conducted a total of 18 site visits (two visits to each of nine sites). Three sites were chosen for each of the three research focus areas. Comprehensive districtwide program sites included Ft. Worth, Texas; Louisville, Kentucky; and Minneapolis, Minnesota. Sites for the school restructuring focus area were Beck Middle School, Georgetown, South Carolina; Lamoni Middle School, Lamoni, Iowa; and Shelburne Middle School, Shelburne, Vermont. Adult-child learning experiences were studied in Community

School District Number 3, New York City; the Natchez-Adams Parent Center, Natchez, Mississippi; and in Rochester Public Schools, Rochester, New York.

After the site visits, researchers analyzed and synthesized the data gathered during the visit into case study narratives. Each case study includes data on context; program planning, design, and implementation; challenges faced by each site; supports necessary to undertake the reforms; outcomes; and within-site analyses, presented as "lessons" that we learned from each site. (For the full text of the case studies, see Volume II: Final Technical Report). Case study summaries are included in this volume.

After all case studies were written, a cross-case narrative was prepared. The cross-case narrative details our analysis of findings across all nine sites, presented as eight issues of middle grade parent, family, and community involvement. Key approaches used by schools and school districts are discussed, and examples from the fieldwork are cited.

The remainder of Volume I is dedicated to an assessment of the impact of reform efforts on outcomes for schools, practitioners, parents, and students; and an assessment of the resources needed to accomplish reform. Volume I concludes with sections on implications for policy and practice, and future research directions.

Other key tasks for this contract, reported elsewhere, included: conducting a national conference (Rutherford, et al., 1992); a review of the current state-of-the-art and five commissioned papers (Rutherford, 1995); two initial practical products (Bernick, Rutherford and Elliott, 1993; Bernick and Rutherford, 1994), and a final practical product drawn from the cross-case narrative (RMC Research, 1995); and dissemination of information from the study (Rutherford, et al., 1993; Rutherford and Billig, 1995).

Conclusion. The reform of American education is a major undertaking. From those involved in this effort we already have learned valuable lessons. Each of the sites we visited have experienced success, to varying degrees. None, however, felt that the job of reform was finished. Time and again we heard that there was more to be learned, and that more time was needed to accomplish their goals. From the experiences of those involved in the process of reform reported here, it is our hope that others can learn and be successful.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank the local site coordinators in each of the nine sites for paving the way for our research teams. A special thanks to school district administrators, school principals, classroom teachers, volunteers, parents, and students who gave many hours of their time with the field teams discussing middle grade family and community involvement.

I especially want to acknowledge the work of Pat Seppanen. Dr. Seppanen played a key role in the initial conceptual framework of the study, gave insightful editorial commentary on the literature review, guided the research and dissemination plans to completion, and served as a leader for one of the field research teams. She provided sound advice and guidance throughout her tenure on the project.

I want to thank Beckie Anderson and Shelley Billig. Ms. Anderson was responsible for completion of two of the final case studies (Natchez, MS, and Rochester, NY). She was given the sometimes daunting task of finding appropriate quotations from hundreds of hours of audiotaped interviews; she succeeded when others would have given up. Dr. Billig joined the project in its final months and provided both writing and editorial expertise to the final products for the study.

Special thanks go to the field teams who collected and analyzed data, and wrote initial draft case study narratives. They worked with us to explore the issues faced across the sites. The members of the field teams were: Pat Seppanen, team leader for Adult-Child Learning Experiences, and Janet Brown; Michael Livesay, team leader for School Restructuring, and Cari Swenson; Rivian Bernick, co-team leader for Comprehensive Districtwide Programs, and Cari Swenson.

Without the support of the office staff we could not have done our job as well. Thanks to Ed Allen, Liz Goodman, and Mary Ann Strassner. Thanks, too, to Dagnija Langberg who - as a new staff member - pitched in to help with the last minute details.

A special thank you to the project's advisory group who helped with the initial conceptualization of the study, reviewed preliminary findings, and gave advice about our practical products. The five panel members were: Nancy Berla, formerly with the National Committee for Citizens in Education; Don Davies, past President of the Institute for Responsive Education, Boston University; Joyce Epstein, Johns Hopkins University, Co-Director (with Don Davies) of the Center on Families, Communities, Schools & Children's Learning; Warlene Gary, Project

Manager, Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education, the National Education Association; and Patrick Shields, SRI International.

To Ralph Adler, Diane D'Angelo, and Chris Dwyer a special thank you for your work on the conceptualization of the issues that are the basis for the cross-case analysis and the final practical product. Working with you was - as always - enlightening and rewarding.

Finally, I would also like to thank our OERI Contracting Officer's Technical Representative, Dr. Oliver Moles. His efforts helped the management of the study run smoothly, and his substantive comments on our work improved its quality.

Barry Rutherford
Project Director

SUMMARY REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter 1

Overview of the Summary Literature Review

"Genuine reform," according to David Seeley (1981), author of *Education Through Partnership*, "depends on working on relationships -- with the home, community groups, politicians and business." There is a rich history of schools and the public they serve working together toward a common goal: the education of America's youth. Existing partnerships between schools and parents, families, and communities are being sustained; new and exciting partnerships are being forged throughout the nation.

This summary review of the literature synthesizes the current state-of-the-art in parent and community involvement; looks at the programs, practices, and their effects in the research and practice literature, especially since 1980; and ends with implications, conclusions and recommendations for research. The literature on **middle grade** (i.e., Grades 4 through 8) **parent and community involvement programs and practices** is highlighted throughout this review since activities in the middle grades are less well-developed and understood than those for earlier grades. This summary review was prepared from the larger literature review prepared as one of the major tasks of this study (Rutherford, Billig & Kettering, 1993). Additionally, we conducted another search of the literature since 1993 and source materials from this search are included here.

Purposes

The initial literature review of the current state-of-the-art served two primary purposes:

- To assist researchers in the refinement of the plan for further research and as part of **Studies of Education Reform: Parent and Community Involvement in Education,** this review - in combination with information gained through commissioned papers and a national conference - provided the basis for fieldwork.
- To inform practitioners, policymakers, and other interested parties of the current state-of-the-art in parent and community involvement programs (where available, the review focuses on middle grade populations).

Definitions

The conceptualization of parent and community involvement programs in Chapter 3 of this review involves the roles of parents and families (well established in research and practice), and community members (emerging as an important field of study) as they are facilitated in schools and school districts.

In 1991 the United States Department of Education commissioned twelve studies of different aspects of national educational reform. In the area of parent and community involvement, three areas were identified for concentrated study: 1) districtwide programs, 2) school restructuring, and 3) adult-child learning experiences (home learning). This study focused on parent and community involvement in middle grades education including these three broad areas outlined in the original Request for Proposals.

To provide clarity, we define the three areas as:

- **Districtwide programs.** The emphasis of comprehensive district programs is on the variety of roles for parents and community members, particularly in schools with many educationally at-risk students. Such comprehensive programs might use innovative methods of communicating with parents on various educational and child development issues; on recruiting community members as volunteers in new, meaningful ways; and on developing other ways to make the programs attractive to different kinds of parents and community members. Collaboration with businesses and community service agencies such as flextime for school conferences or other school-related activities may also be considered.

- **School restructuring.** At the building level, schools may change their practices and structure in significant ways to encourage more parent involvement with emphasis on school initiated activities to promote contacts with all parents.

- **Adult-Child Learning Experiences (home learning).** Parents can extend their children's school learning through home activities such as reading; assisting with homework; encouraging family games, activities, and discussions; and improving their own parenting skills. Parents are assisted by the school staff through workshops, seminars and parent education courses or through suggestions from teachers for home learning activities.

Criteria for Selection and Inclusion

A determination of the sources to be selected and included in this review was made according to the following criteria:

- **Timeliness**. Primarily, research and materials related to practice included in this review have been conducted or developed after 1980. Materials that were developed prior to 1980 have been included if they were used as a foundation for later research or program development. It is worth noting that much research was done prior to 1980 when funding for research was more available.

- **Grade level appropriateness**. Every attempt was made to include literature and research on **middle grade** parent and community involvement programs. However, research and materials are **across all grade levels**. Items from other grades were included to provide an indication of the rich sources of information on parent and community involvement programs, and to illustrate the need for further research in the middle grades.

- **Focus on the roles of parents, families, and community members as facilitated in the areas of home learning, school restructuring, or districtwide programs.** The items included in this review focused primarily on one or more of the three topic areas mentioned above. Other items were included if they addressed the overall context of parent and community involvement in grades four through eight or if they laid the foundation for further research or material development in any of the three topic areas.

Limitations of the Review

This review of the literature is limited by the following factors:

- **Structure of schools**. Schools are rarely organized around middle grades, i.e., Grades 4 through 8. It is often difficult to separate those aspects pertaining to the middle grades from studies that include the early elementary grades (K-3) and/or secondary school grades (9-12).

- **Overlap**. In our review of research and practices in the schools, we found considerable overlap among these topics. When appropriate, we have indicated where issues under one topic are related to the other two.

Guiding Questions

The conceptual framework proposed for this study indicated three areas of interest: the context of parent and community involvement programs; the roles that parents, families, and community members assume in the education of their children; and the effects of promising programs on parents, students, school staff, schools, and school districts. This framework guided the review of the literature:

- What are the contexts within which parent and community involvement programs operate?
    How do these contextual factors influence those programs?

- What are the roles that parents, families, and community members assume in the education of their children?
  - How are these roles facilitated?
  - What key elements are specific to these areas?
  - What key elements cut across all areas?
  - What key resources are needed to design, develop, implement, and sustain these roles?

- What are the effects of promising programs on parents, students, school staff, schools, and/or school districts?
  - How are these effects assessed or determined?

Overview of the Chapters

Chapters 2 through 4 contain a detailed discussion of parent and community involvement programs and practices. Chapter 5 draws conclusions, discusses implications, and recommends directions for future research direction.

Chapter 2

The Context of Parent and Community Involvement Programs

Overview

Context takes into account the conditions within which programs operate. Parent and community involvement programs operate in rich contextual environments: the environment of schools and school districts. From the literature we see that these contextual factors serve to define the need to develop and sustain relationships between the home, school, and community while simultaneously serving as deterrents to any progress toward enhanced relationships.

Historically, it has been evident that local, state, and federal policies have either facilitated or inhibited the development and implementation of parent and community involvement programs. Four levels of policy are important to this discussion:

- **School policies** exist in two forms: as "stand-alone" documents, e.g., policies that address homework, or policies that are subsumed under a larger district policy framework.
- **District policies** designed to involve parents and communities in schooling are beginning to surface in light of state and federal initiatives.
- **State policies** reflect the urgency to use the resources of home and community to ensure student success. Forty-seven of fifty states responded to a survey about parent involvement policies and guidelines; over half had either policies or guidelines.
- **Federal policies** in education have a long and varied history. Parent involvement policies under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) were designed in response to social changes of the 1960s. Although these policies have changed through several reauthorizations, they nevertheless provide a template for other efforts that are intended to guarantee the involvement of parents in schooling.

A number of other trends and factors have been identified as either positively or negatively influencing parent and community involvement efforts, ***regardless of the organizational structure of the school:***

- **Diversity within systems.** As families, communities, and cultural and economic systems change, so do the roles and responses of parents, schools, and communities. A systems perspective provides a framework for understanding these changes.
- **Perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs.** It is a commonly held belief that parents, communities, and schools work toward a common goal - producing successful students.

Research indicates that perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs differ dramatically among the constituents of schooling.

The literature reveals at least three factors ***directly affecting middle grade*** parent and community involvement:

- **Institutional settings.** Logistics, location, curriculum, and school size affect parent and community involvement at the middle grades. These institutional settings provide little encouragement, and are more often frightening to parents.

- **Pre-adolescent/adolescent development.** The developmental stages of pre-adolescence and adolescence present particular challenges for parents, schools, and communities.

- **Expectations, attitudes, and beliefs.** What teachers and schools expect of middle grade students and parents changes as children mature and move into different academic settings. These expectations are often misperceived by both children and their parents.

An historical and contemporary view of the policies, trends, and factors that provides an understanding of the context of parent and community involvement is discussed in detail in the remainder of this chapter.

The Policy Environment

Historical influences provide an insight into the role of schools, and local, state, and federal agencies in the development of policies concerning parent and community involvement. Snider's (1990a) historical review of the role of parents and community in school decision making portrays a long, and often embittered, struggle between politicians, practitioners, parents, and communities.

Exploration of four contemporary policy levels (school, district, state and federal) may facilitate and/or inhibit the involvement of parents and communities in educational processes, programs, and practices (Strong Families, Strong Schools, 1994). Generally, policies are not written explicitly for middle grades, but it is noted where they exist.

School Policies. Current school level policies and expectations tend to center on what parents can provide for **teachers and schools** rather than what teachers and schools can provide for **parents** and there is evidence that policies and resource constraints in the schools themselves may inhibit parent involvement. There are few programs to assist parents in attaining skills to work with their children (Dauber and Epstein, 1991).

Conflicting expectations for the student may surface between parents and teachers. A similar problem occurs if there is a lack of materials or other resources for teachers to use to design or implement the home learning activities (Chrispeels, 1991b). Schools need to implement home learning policies that provide sufficient resources - funds, time, staff, and training - to enable teachers to be more effective in this area (Zeldin, 1989; Chrispeels, 1991a; Dauber and Epstein, 1991; McLaughlin and Shields, 1987).

District Policies. District level policy initiatives mirror federal and state initiatives. Chavkin and Williams (1987) surveyed educators, school board members, and parents in five southwestern states and found that parent involvement policies at the district level were virtually non-existent as of 1983 although educators and parents desired more school policies about parent involvement.

In 1988 San Diego City Schools adopted a district parent involvement policy that closely paralleled the state policy. The policy addresses structures for effective parent involvement, supports for teachers and parents, and the use of community resources (Chrispeels, 1991b). Indianapolis Public Schools view parent involvement as "an important component of the district's school improvement plan" (Warner, 1991:373).

State Policies. The development of policy by state education agencies "...stems from the acknowledgement that schools alone cannot ensure that all students are successful and the additional resources of home and the community must also be brought to bear on the task at hand" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1991). Additionally, parent and community involvement policy may serve to provide state education administrators with information on educational practices (Nardine, Chapman, and Moles, 1989). Nardine and Morris (1991) surveyed state legislation and found that 20 states had enacted parent involvement legislation, six states had written guidelines, and 21 states had neither legislation nor written guidelines governing parent involvement. The authors reported that legislation on parent involvement was not a high priority and that a wide diversity exists from state to state in the decisions about policies and guidelines.

Federal Policies. The first active intervention in parent involvement by the federal government came with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1965. Title I of the ESEA was created as much to empower poor communities to solve their own problems as to provide funding for the education of disadvantaged children (Snider, 1990b). Legislative requirements for the establishment of parent advisory councils at the district and school levels were enacted by 1978. With changes in 1981, parents and community members were given minimal responsibility as "advisors". Without federal requirements of parent involvement, most state and local education agencies chose to give little more than lip service to parent involvement (Nardine and Morris, 1991).

The 1988 reauthorization of Chapter 1 included the Hawkins-Stafford Amendments to the ESEA. Federal requirements concerning parent involvement were reinstated in the development of parent involvement policies. With the enactment of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, Title I (formerly Chapter 1) focuses attention on the involvement of families through Parent Compacts.

Henderson and Marburger (1990) describe six federal educational programs, in addition to Chapter 1 legislation, that include policies pertaining to parent involvement as a necessary component of success: the Bilingual Education Act (Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended); the Education of the Handicapped Act, P.L. 94-142 (1974); the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 1974); Even Start (Part B of the Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988); Head Start (1965); and FIRST (Fund for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching, authorized in the Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988).

Researchers argue that policy plays a critical role in parent involvement and should be a priority for policymakers (Davies, 1987; and McLaughlin and Shields, 1986, [illegible]. Oakes and Lipton (1990). Heath and McLaughlin (1987) call for the development of a national child resource policy.

The next section looks at trends and factors which influence, both positively and negatively, parent and community involvement in schooling and can have a powerful effect on policies.

Trends and Factors Influencing Parent and Community Involvement Programs

First we focus on the trends and factors that impact parent and community involvement programs ***regardless of the organizational structure of the school.*** Next we look at the trends and factors that have a direct impact on parent and community involvement ***at the middle grades.***

Diversity Within Systems

The focus of this section of the review is on the diversity of three systems that influence parent and community involvement in schools: families, communities, and economies. Although we attempt to delineate the relationships between trends and factors of each of these system and their influence on programs, it is important to note that systems do not function in isolation. An holistic approach to systems provides insight into ways schools can be restructured to facilitate parent and community involvement.

Families. In a seminal article on family diversity and school policy, Lindner (1987) analyzes three myths about families: the myth of the monolithic family form, the myth of the independent family, and the myth of parental determinism.

The monolithic family has been replaced by other family forms such a single parents, blended families, dual career families, extended families, and so on. In fact, a diversity of family forms has existed throughout American history. Families are now expected to meet challenges that lead to a dependence on experts outside the home (Kenniston in Lindner, 1987:9). How much of a child's life experiences are determined by parents and how much by others is vague. However, changes within social and economic systems have a great impact on families: an impact which may be difficult to overcome.

Communities. Contemporary communities are difficult to characterize because of their diversity: there are large communities and small communities; there are communities that are culturally diverse and there are communities that are populated by persons of one culture; there are urban, suburban, and rural communities. Examples of population demographics illustrating the diversity in communities abound. Bliss (1986) suggests several ways schools can enhance parent involvement in these diverse communities: 1) have more realistic expectations of parent capabilities; 2) recognize that children adapt faster to language and cultural diversity than do parents; 3) focus on programs for middle schools and junior high; and 4) understand that children with greatest needs often do not have a parent available to become involved.

Cultural heritage, another important component of a diverse community, is often overlooked in education. American Indians, for example, see a need for education reforms to better meet their needs (American Indian Science and Engineering Society, 1989).

Economies. The economic system may have the greatest interactive effect on other systems. A strong economic system impacts families and communities in positive ways. Poverty, once thought to be the exclusive domain of urban centers with high concentrations of low socioeconomic populations, is now affecting urban, suburban, and rural areas alike. The perceptions of parents from low socioeconomic conditions can provide valuable lessons as educators seek to involve these parents.

Brantlinger (1985b) interviewed low-income parents and found that the majority of those parents felt that schools favor students from higher income families and they generally felt powerless to change these perceived inequities (Lyons, Robbins and Smith, 1993). The perceptions of parents from low socioeconomic conditions can provide valuable lessons as educators seek to involve those parents. In restructuring parent involvement programs family, community and economic systems must be taken into account.

Perceptions, Attitudes, and Beliefs

The literature reveals that the perceptions of parents and school personnel concerning the purposes, goals, and outcomes of schooling may differ dramatically. The resulting pattern of interaction may give rise to parents and school personnel viewing each other with mutual mistrust and misunderstanding (United States Department of Education, 1994). Some of the misperceptions stem from the attitudes and beliefs that teachers hold about the willingness of certain types of parents to help their children academically, a view that low income families are in some way deficient (Davies, 1988) and they have a middle class model of what constitutes a "good" family. Also, when teachers teach a large number of students or differ from them culturally, they are less likely to know them and their parents and therefore make less effort to involve the parents (see review in Dauber and Epstein, 1991).

The reputed disinterest of low income and less educated families has been refuted by many researchers who have found that, in general, these parents do wish to become involved, but often lack the information needed to do so (Epstein and Becker, 1982; Clark, 1983; McLaughlin and Shields, 1987; Davies, 1988, Dauber and Epstein, 1991; Epstein, 1984a; 1986b; 1991a; Epstein and Salinas, 1993). In fact, Lightfoot (1975) found that not only do low income parents value education, but they view schooling as an avenue for economic and social success. Single parent and dual career families also want to get involved (Metropolitan Life Survey, 1987; Epstein, 1984a).

The Parent Involvement Education Project (Williams, 1984) surveyed parents, teachers, principals, and other school professionals on five aspects of parent involvement: 1) attitudes; 2) decisions; 3) roles; 4) activities; and 5) teacher training. The study showed a high interest in home-school partnerships by parents (Moles, 1987; Williams, 1984; Herman and Yeh, 1983) but with a more expanded role for the parents such as participation in advisory and governance activities (Williams and Stallworth, 1983; Ahlenius, 1983). Chavkin and Williams (1987) conducted a survey that corroborates this interest by the parents. The authors suggested that administrators envision a broader role for parents and use them as educational resources.

The next section of this review explores factors that influence the development of programs specifically **at the middle grades.**

Institutional Settings

The New York State School Board Association (1987) has identified four factors that inhibit parent involvement at the middle grades:

- **Logistics** - Departmentalization is often intimidating to parents when their children have several teachers in middle schools.
- **Location** - The location of the school may present problems with transportation, or the school may be located in neighborhoods which are unfamiliar, unsafe, and/or frightening.
- **Curriculum** - If parents are expected to serve as primary reinforcers of what children are learning at school, then it is critical that they understand the subjects their children are exposed to on a daily basis. Some parents lack the skills necessary to provide homework assistance, nor are they capable of serving as tutors.
- **School Size** - Parents may become confused, both mentally and physically, when confronted with a larger, unfamiliar building.

Recognizing that such barriers exist, the Committee for Economic Development, Research and Policy (1987) strongly states, "We urge that these (junior high and middle) schools become the subject of new and comprehensive research and scrutiny. If not, it is doubtful that successful reform can be implemented" (p. 57).

Middle and junior high schools in particular present difficult challenges to involving parents in learning activities because they typically are large and impersonal with each student having many teachers.

Epstein and Dauber (1989b), for example, found that teachers in self-contained classrooms are more likely to involve parents than teachers in teamed or departmentalized programs. Teachers of reading or English are also more likely to engage parents in home learning activities. Further, Dauber and Epstein (1991) reported that parents of sixth and seventh grade students are more likely to be involved with their children's education at home whereas parents of eighth grade students are more involved at the school building level.

Pre-Adolescent/Adolescent Development

Added to a sometimes confusing array of teachers and subject areas are the changing character and needs of children. Between the ages of 10 to 13, children change physically, mentally, and socially. They strive for more independence from their families at the same time that they require more support and reassurance (Berla, 1991; Turning Points, 1992). In addition, children of these ages increase their abilities to take on more responsibilities; gain greater understanding of abstractions and of themselves and others; build their memory, academic, and social skills; and add to their abilities to resolve conflicts (Epstein, 1987b; Ruble, 1980; Simmons, et al., 1979; Stipek, 1984). While students are going through many biological changes, their adolescence is defined through their culture. In this pluralist culture, there is a wide variety of ways that individuals experience adolescence (Atwater, 1983) which have an effect on their school experience.

Expectations, Attitudes, and Beliefs

Expectations of teachers and the socialization of students are also found to conflict, especially during the middle years. When the cultural expectations and beliefs of the school conflict with those of low income families (Helton and Oakland, 1977), Black families (Holliday, 1985; Boman and Howard, 1985; Zeldin, 1989) or families from linguistically diverse backgrounds, the child is not provided with the "maximum support for educational achievement that could be offered by home and school partnership" (Zeldin, 1989:27).

The relationship between parents and their children also changes as the children mature, as does parents' confidence in their own skills and knowledge (Maccoby, 1984; Sigel, et al., 1984). While parents generally gain confidence in their abilities to guide and interact with their children, they lose confidence in their ability to help their children with their school work (Epstein, 1986a).

All of this is complicated by the fact that as students enter middle school or junior high school, report card grades tend to decline even as overall competence increases (Peterson, 1986). This occurs because middle school students are being compared with a new, larger group of students who also did well in elementary school and because the students are presented with more demanding tasks and more competition for grades (Epstein, 1987b).

Differences in academic expectations and classroom organization between the middle grades and the elementary grades caused some students and their families to misperceive their relationship when it came to schooling (Epstein, et al., 1990). Many felt that all homework was designed to be done alone. Some parents may think that they should not try to help their children if they are not "experts" at the particular academic subject matter.

A study of inner city elementary and middle schools by Dauber and Epstein (1991) showed that the parent involvement programs in elementary schools are stronger, more positive, and more comprehensive than those for children in the middle grades. Useem (1990) found a similar pattern: parents of children in the middle grades received less information and guidance precisely at a time when they needed more in order to understand the larger and more complex schools, subjects, and schedules.

Low-income Black parents from two junior high schools in Washington, D.C. identified economic and educational differences between themselves and their children's teachers as barriers to home-school collaboration (Leitch and Tangri, 1988). While low socioeconomic status Black families often lack both human and material resources, their participation in their children's education enhances educational achievement (Slaughter and Epps, 1987).

Summary

Parent and community involvement is influenced by a variety of contextual factors. The school, district, state, and federal policy environments contribute to the perception of the importance of parent and community involvement, to the way schools or districts define what the various roles and relationships should be, and to the explicit policies that have been developed.

The diversity within families, communities, cultures, and economies, however, make uniform conceptualization of a school/parent/ community partnership difficult. Given the inherent interdependence of such systems, however, the partners must find a way to accommodate both universal and local concerns. Added to this challenge are the differing perceptions on the part of each group regarding the definition of appropriate roles and relationships. In some cases, these disparate views are compounded by the differences in socioeconomic characteristics of school staff and families.

Factors within the school setting itself may also serve to inhibit involvement and skew perceptions. Schools that are departmentalized or are very large, that are located in areas that are not easily accessible or are perceived to be unsafe, or that are confusing in their physical layout may, by their nature, discourage parents from coming onsite. Curriculum that surpasses the skills that parents have also discourages involvement.

Finally, the students themselves influence the nature and scope of the family/school partnership. During the middle grade years, the children change physically, mentally, and socially. They tend to seek more independence from their families while at the same time needing more support as they face greater academic challenges. Student and teacher expectations for themselves and each other may also shift during this time.

Chapter 3

The Development and Implementation Of Parent and Community Involvement Programs

Overview

While parents, family, and community members may assume specific roles as they become involved in the education of children, for example as volunteers in the classroom (see Epstein and Connors' typology, 1993), a synthesis of the literature reveals three overarching roles that are created in the development and implementation of parent and community involvement programs (Lyons, Robbins and Smith, 1983; Lynn, 1994). Each of these roles is actualized in very different ways in relationships in classrooms, schools, and school districts:

- **Parents as the primary resource in the education of their children** is best exemplified in **home learning.** Home learning is the activity, or set of activities, that parents and family members may engage in to help their children succeed academically. This partnership role between parents and/or family members and schools may have the greatest impact on achievement.

- **Parents and community members as supporters and advocates for the education of their children** is facilitated through **site-based school restructuring.** Restructuring schools to create parent and community partnerships with schools focuses on organizational structure. Changing activities; creating new relationships between parents, families, communities, and schools; and implementing innovative strategies are ways that schools can restructure to facilitate parent and community involvement in this role.

- **Parents and community members as participants in the education of all children** incorporates a broader vision in the partnership between schools and the populations they serve. **Districtwide programs** provide the vehicle for parents and community members to be involved in roles that reach beyond the immediate impact of an individual child to the impact on all children in the district.

There are key program elements and strategies that are specific to those programs that are designed and implemented to enhance the partnership roles of parents, families, communities, and schools. Successful initiatives consider these program elements and strategies in design, development, and implementation.

- The key program elements specific to **home learning** are: well-developed local practices; a willingness of teachers to build on parent strengths; ongoing recruitment using multiple methods; effective strategies that promote home learning; and the home learning environment.

- **School restructuring** activities focus on the following key program elements: an emphasis on quality education; family participation; and site-based management.

- Key program elements for **districtwide programs** include: development and implementation of policy; embracing the diversity of families and communities; and a focus on the linkages with the community and other agencies.

This literature reveals that several key program elements cut across **all levels of the education system:**

- **Communication** is a primary building block that takes into account the equal participation by all the partners.
- **Key players** including students, parents, families, and community members are the primary focus in the development and implementation of parent and community involvement programs. Other key players may be teachers and administrators.
- **Resources** such as funding, personnel, etc. are essential in the development and implementation of parent and community involvement programs.

The roles of parents, families, and communities and the partnerships that are created with schools speak to programs that are designed, developed, and implemented **at any grade level.** Research literature on **middle grade** parent involvement will be highlighted.

Overarching Roles Of Parents, Families, and Community Members in the Development and Implementation of Programs

Parents as a Primary Resource in the Education of their Children

The research literature on enhancing parental roles in this regard generally focuses on how parents can help their children through home learning activities and the ways in which such activities can be optimized.

Home Learning

Involving parents in home learning activities vastly improves students' productivity (Rich, 1987a; Epstein, 1991b; Walberg, 1984) Programs and activities that may be called "home learning" take many forms, but most commonly include homework, leisure reading, family discussions, educational games, and enrichment activities (Moles, 1991).

Key Element: Well-developed local practices. Dauber and Epstein (1991:11) asserted that "regardless of parent education, family size, student ability, or school level (elementary or middle school), parents are more likely to become partners in their children's education if they perceive that the schools have strong practices to involve parents at school, at home on homework, and at home on reading activities." Districts and schools play a key role in developing effective school-parent partnerships to encourage home learning (Birman, 1987; Hamilton and Cochran, 1988; Comer, 1988b).

The most successful schools design adult-child learning programs with parents (Crispeels, 1991a) to fit the needs and expectations of families who intend to participate (Zeldin, 1989; Epstein, 1989; Rich, 1985; Slaughter and Epps, 1987). Training to work with families adds to the success. (Zeldin, 1989; Chrispeels, 1991a; Dauber and Epstein, 1991).

Epstein (1991a) has concluded that for teachers, parent involvement in students' home learning is largely an organizational problem. "Teachers must have clear, easy, and reliable ways to (a) distribute learning activities (b) receive and process messages from parents (c) evaluate the help students obtain at home, and (d) continue to manage and evaluate the parent involvement practices" (Epstein, 1991a:4).

Key Element: A willingness of teachers to build on parent strengths. Effective programs respect and utilize the strengths of all parents, regardless of parental income, education, or social status (Zeldin, 1989) to form a strong partnership. Further, successful programs view even minor involvement as the basis for later, more active involvement (Eastman, 1988).

Research from the Johns Hopkins Surveys of Schools and Family Connections (Epstein and Becker, 1987) showed that teachers believe that parents' help is necessary if schools are to solve problems. Teachers mainly requested that parents review or practice activities that were taught in class. Some researchers have focused on how to increase teachers' understandings of the literacy practices that go on in any home (Brice-Heath, 1983; Cochran, 1987; Slaughter, 1988) which understanding have been shown to enhance teachers' effectiveness.

Key Element: Ongoing recruitment using multiple methods. Schools need to use such strategies as home visits, community agencies and word-of-mouth for the "hard to reach" parents (Zeldin, 1989). School-generated print materials usually work with middle class parents (Pickarts and Fargo, 1975; McLaughlin and Shields, 1987). Rich (1985) offered suggestions for recruiting bilingual parents such as bilingual hotline, bilingual media campaign, etc. In her review of Thompson's *Family Math*, and Epstein's *Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork*, Chrispeels (1991a) found that home learning activities were most effective when there was personal communication between parents, families, and teachers (for example, receiving invitations to visit in the school and phone calls about student progress), and when the school provided translation, transportation, and child care.

Key Element: Effective strategies for promoting home learning. Many researchers found that parents need specific advice and strategies to enable them to engage in home learning activities. Successful programs have some of the following components: 1) prescriptive component (Rich, 1986a); 2) flexible program to fit parents' time (Zeldin, 1989: Barber, 1987); 3) meaningful and interesting (Brown, 1989); 4) on-going projects (Brown, 1989; Epstein and Herrick, 1991); 5) parents can ask questions and listen (Epstein, 1991a and 1991a:5); 6) personal support of parents by teachers (Lightfoot, 1975; Crispeels, 1987b); and 7) teachers encourage parental involvement (Dauber and Epstein, 1991:13).

Key Element: The home learning environment. Several researchers pointed to the importance of the home learning environment (Clark, 1983; Walberg, 1984; Henderson, 1987; de Kanter, et al., 1986; Zeldin, 1989; Chrispeels, 1991a): overt modeling of the importance of education, provision of youth enrichment activities, appropriate household chores, and including children in family decision making . In general, to promote student motivation to learn, family and school structures need to be designed to support the developmental demands created by biological, cognitive, personal, and social growth of the child as he/she matures (Lipsitz, 1984; Epstein, 1986b; Rich, 1985).

Home learning in the middle grades. The major emphasis of activities that may be termed "home learning" in grades four through eight include helping parents:

- become partners with teachers in encouraging children with their schoolwork;
- interact with their children at home to support school goals and programs;
- understand early adolescence and middle grade programs; and
- assist children with decisions that affect their own and the families' futures (Epstein and Salinas, 1990).

Epstein and Herrick (1991) developed and evaluated a number of specific practices that teachers could use to increase parent involvement in the home. One such practice was the use of home learning packets in math and language arts in the first year to which they added science and health in the second year. These were used during the summer by parents of students who would enter grades seven and eight. Evaluations showed that students who worked with their parents completed a greater number of activities in the packets and that the packets had a moderate effect on student performance for some students, especially those who had marginal skills.

Parents and Community Members as Supporters and Advocates for the Education of their Children

The focus of the review in this area is on practices that are implemented at the school building level to encourage the role of parents as supporters of their children's education: to promote contacts with all parents, to help parents learn more about their children's school programs and progress, and to help them gain information on home learning activities and home supports for education. The larger community must also be given options for involvement (USED, 1994).

Key Element: A focus on quality education for all students. The research literature for Effective Schools emphasizes the importance of developing the abilities of all children regardless of their current achievement level or their cultural, ethnic, or socioeconomic background. The concept of teaching the whole child has extended upward from the elementary level. Educators must consider the social, emotional, physical as well as the academic development of the middle grade student (Davies, 1991).

The changing structure of the family and its related needs must be considered in relationship to the school and its available resources (Epstein, 1988). Schools and families must work together to form high, yet realistic expectations that lead to success for all students as they restructure the school to meet their local needs (American Indian Science and Engineering Society, 1989; Bliss, 1986; Davies, 1991).

Key Element: Family participation in their children's education. Davies (1991) recommended that we change from parent involvement to family involvement because for some children, it is the grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters or even neighbors who make the most significant contribution in supporting the child's educational development outside of the school. Schools must take the lead in helping families have the knowledge and skills to provide support to their children (Bliss, 1986; Moles, 1990; Slaughter and Epps, 1987). Principals need to take the lead to ensure that parent and community involvement is a high priority for the school staff, parents, and the community (Purnell and Gotts, 1985).

Specific learning activities can be promoted by specific school practices: providing homework hotlines, after-school homework tutoring sessions, or assigning interactive projects that require parents' assistance (Chrispeels, 1991a). Homework must be clear, of an appropriate quantity, and integrated into the classroom (Walberg, 1984; Chrispeels, 1991a). Researchers also suggested that the school provide surrogate family members for students whose parents cannot participate (Davies, 1988).

Key Element: Site-based management. Site-based management has emphasized the importance of appropriate policies and local decision making as it relates to the development of effective schools where parents are involved. The Effective Schools research highlighted the importance of involvement of the school staff and parents in the development and implementation of comprehensive school improvement plans. Without such staff and community involvement from the grass roots level both commitment and motivation to carry out these plans was often lacking (Taylor and Levine, 1991; Smith and O'Day, 1991). In 1987, the Committee for Economic Development issued a report, *Children In Need: Investment Strategies for the Educationally Disadvantaged,* that argued for this grassroots strategy for school improvement.

Parent Involvement in middle grade school restructuring. Berla, Henderson, and Kerewsky (1989) outlined the kinds of things that middle schools should be doing if an effective school/parent/family partnership is in place:

- A clear, welcoming parent involvement policy is published for all to see and posted in an obvious place.
- The school is organized so that at least one person knows each child well.
- The school office is friendly and open.
- The school sponsors parent-to-parent communication and events.
- A full-time parent contact person is responsible for bringing parents and school together.
- There is a parent room in the school building.
- Parents and school staff work together to determine parents' needs and provide necessary services.
- Parents whose primary language is not English are made to feel welcome at the school and a translator is provided to help them communicate.

The Teachers Involve Parents In Schoolwork (TIPS) model (Epstein, 1987b) and the New Partnerships for Student Achievement (NPSA) program (Home and School Institute, 1988; Zeldin, 1989) provide elementary and middle school teachers with structured homework assignments in reading, language arts, math, science, and the arts that parents and students work together to complete. Megaskills (Rich, 1985), on the other hand, teaches parents more generic skills to use in everyday life to help them to motivate their children to succeed in school. School and home (Smith, in Zeldin, 1990) offers consistent learning activities for children and rewards them daily for completed homework.

Parents And Community Members as Participants in the Education of All Children

In this section the focus is on districtwide programs as a vehicle for meeting both the common and diverse needs of children. Key elements and the types of linkages that foster positive interactions are addressed.

Districtwide Parent and Community Involvement Programs

The 1989 Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitude Toward the Public Schools (Gallup and Elam, 1989) revealed that a majority of parents believed that they should be involved in tangible ways, e.g., in decisions on allocation of school funds and selection and hiring of school administrators, in the reform/restructuring of schools (Solomon, 1991). Snider (1990c) reported that in Chicago parents gained a controlling majority on local school councils. Other urban districts have explored this "Chicago-style" proposal, including Seattle, Boston, and Houston. In Denver Public Schools, Colorado Governor Roy Romer ordered the formation of 12-member school councils to supervise the running of the schools. Parents, community members, business leaders, and school personnel on these school councils have made decisions and changes that include: the setting of school goals and priorities, hiring and firing of administrators, and schoolwide exemptions from districtwide mandated standardized testing. Educators must be prepared to help parent and community groups by sharing their knowledge.

Key Element: Development and implementation of policy. As students progress to the middle grades, it is less likely that parents will become involved (Henderson and Marburger, 1990). However, effective district and state policies will assist in involving parents and the community (Davies, 1987; Heath and McLaughlin, 1987; McLaughlin and Shields, 1987; National School Board Association, 1988; Williams and Chavkin, 1990) that are vital to the restructuring of schools.

The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (1990) contends that policies should contain the following concepts:

- Opportunities for all parents to become informed about how the parent involvement program will be designed and carried out.
- Participation of parents who lack literacy skills or who do not speak English.
- Regular information for parents about their child's participation and progress in specific educational programs and the objectives of those programs.
- Opportunities for parents to assist in the instructional process at school and at home.
- Professional development for teachers and staff to enhance their effectiveness with parents.
- Linkages with social service agencies and community groups to address key family and community issues.
- Involvement of parents of children at all ages and grade levels.
- Recognition of diverse family structures, circumstances and responsibilities, including differences that might impede parent participation. The person(s) responsible for a child may not be the child's biological parent(s) and policies and programs should include participation by all persons interested in the child's educational progress.

Key Element: Embracing the diversity of families in the design of programs and practices. Districtwide programs must consider all families, including those considered by some schools to be hard to reach (Epstein, 1991b) and at-risk (Zeldin, 1990). The parent involvement program in McAllen, Texas, is exemplary in this area (D'Angelo and Adler, 1991).

Key element: Focus on the linkages with the community and agencies supporting education. Businesses are recognizing the importance of quality education in the communities in which they are located. They interact with the schools through volunteers, equipment, donations and mini-grants, and such districtwide programs as Adopt-A-School. Cities-In-Schools is a long standing effort to align businesses with schools to address the comprehensive services for students. Cohen (1990) reported that about 1,000 companies are also engaged in efforts to help families balance responsibilities between home and work. The broader the involvement of the community, the more likely the school will move toward realizing their full potential (Crispeels, 1991b; Henderson, 1986; Jones, 1991; Epstein, 1991b; Griswold, 1986).

Key Program Elements That Cut Across Programs at All Levels

The common elements for successful partnerships are the following and will be addressed in the following sections: 1) communication and home learning, school restructuring, and district programs; 2) key players are teachers, principals, and district leadership; and 3) key resources are funding, personnel, training, and coordination.

Key Element: Communication

Communication and home learning. Several researchers have studied the need for mutuality between the home and the school to promote home learning activities. Leler (1983) found that the two-way communication projects showed positive results, and that the best programs were those that trained parents to be tutors. Cole and Griffin (1987) also noted that two-way communication is effective, especially when it is explicitly recognized by educators.

Communication and school restructuring. Parents need basic information regarding school goals, programs, and policies if they are to be effective in supporters. Schools must listen to what parents have to say about their involvement in the schools and then develop programs to meet identified parent needs (Chrispeels, 1987a). Home visits, parent/teacher conferences, meetings, and workshops are viewed as the most effective with all types of parents, especially hard to reach and/or low income parents (Davies, 1988). Radio, television, and audio and video tapes have been used to inform parents and community members (D'Angelo and Adler, 1991).

Communication and district programs. D'Angelo and Adler (1991) described effective communication in three areas: face-to-face communication, the use of technology, and written communication.

Districts in Lima, Ohio; Buffalo, New York; Natchez/Adams, Mississippi; and the Migrant Education State Parent Advisory Council in New York have used parent conferencing techniques and the establishment of parenting centers within schools as vehicles for communication.

Efforts in McAllen, Texas; Poudre School District (Fort Collins, Colorado); San Diego, California; Indianapolis, Indiana; Casey County, Kentucky; and Omaha, Nebraska have successfully integrated technology into their parent/family/community programs.

Written communication (newsletters, calendars, etc.) has been used effectively in parent involvement programs in Omaha, Nebraska; Cahokia, Illinois; and Palatine, Illinois.

D'Angelo and Adler (1991) provided four caveats for improving communication:

- Communication strategies for individual schools should be adapted to match the needs of families.
- Materials must reach the intended audience.
- If a meeting, workshop, presentation, assembly, or other event presents information deemed essential for parents, then the schools must find other ways to get that information to those who cannot be there.
- Don't wait for a problem to arise before contacting parents.

Key Players

The responsibility for effective involvement must begin with building administrators and teachers (Center for Evaluation, Development and Research, 1990) with support by the district. They are the ones having direct contact with parents and community members.

Key Player: Principals. The principal must ensure that parent and community involvement in the school is well planned, comprehensive, systematic (Crispeels et al., 1988; Henderson and Marburger, 1986; Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, 1990), and is appropriate to all types of families. This leadership role of the principal is particularly important beyond the elementary school because of the decrease in parent involvement with each passing grade.

Key Player: Teachers. Teachers can reach out to parents to form partnerships that benefit families and enhance the educational progress of their students. The ones who take initiatives tend to have higher student achievement gains and feel better supported by parents (Epstein and Becker, 1982; Epstein, 1987c; Tangri and Moles, 1987).

Key Player: District leadership. District leadership is necessary to provide a comprehensive and coordinated effort for creating and sustaining effective parent and community involvement. By aligning district policy with practice, districts are better able to fulfill the promise that parent and community involvement offers in the development of quality education for all students.

Resources Needed to Develop, Implement, and Sustain Parent and Community Involvement Programs

Key Resource: Funding. Currently across the United States, funding for program development and evaluation at the state level is lacking (Nardine and Morris, 1991). Epstein (1991b) , and Chavkin and Williams (1987) suggested that monetary resources, which demonstrate a commitment to program success, should be provided by school districts for the implementation of effective programs.

Key Resource: Personnel. Sufficient staff are needed to operate effective programs (Williams and Chavkin, 1990). Epstein (1991b), Berla (1991) and Earle (1990) recommended that a family/school coordinator be hired to link school, district, and state efforts regarding partnerships. This staff person would work with families, school personnel, and at-risk students.

Key Resource: Training. Teachers should receive preservice and inservice training if they are to implement a successful parent involvement program (Zeldin, 1990; Chrispeels, 1991b; Dauber and Epstein, 1991; Comer 1988a; Warner, 1991; Williams and Chavkin, 1990). Epstein and Dauber (1989a) pointed out that math, science, and social studies teachers may require more assistance than reading and language arts teachers since they currently do not place as much value on parent involvement. Planners of home-based parent involvement programs need to reach parents who most need to be involved, especially low income and minority parents. Training would make them aware of pitfalls and barriers.

Training for school/family/community partnerships should also include parent training, especially related to helping parents acquire parenting ideas and leadership strategies for helping their children achieve literacy skills (Clark, 1989).

Key Resource: Coordination. Davies (1985) wrote that "co-production", i.e., parents/families and schools as joint contributors and participants in individual and collective activities that contribute to more effective instruction and school achievement, should be initiated by teachers and principals and coordinated with all school personnel. The implementation of such a project would require a significant investment of time and funds for development and promotion of materials and for appropriate teacher and parent training.

While some recent research has focused on methods for creating positive learning environments in the home (Walberg, 1984), others emphasize programs for increasing teachers' and administrators' understandings of the 'natural' learning that occurs with the home (Brice and Heath, 1983; Cochran and Henderson, 1986). Rich (1985) advocates community outreach efforts, noting that the greater the continuity and contact, the greater the benefit for the child.

Summary

Parents and community members can adopt a variety of roles and relationships with schools. Three of the most critical roles they can assume are:

- becoming primary educational resources for their children;
- becoming supporters and/or advocates for children through site-based school restructuring efforts; and
- participating in the development and implementation of district programs that support partnerships.

Home learning activities present the most common vehicles through which parents and community members assume primary educational roles for elementary and middle grade children. The most successful of these activities incorporate practices that take local factors into account and that build on parent strengths. Home learning activities often take the form of modeling high expectations, supporting schoolwork and homework, providing a positive learning climate in the home, and attending conferences. School practices that make positive contributions to parent involvement include site based management, clear and welcoming policies and communications, liaison personnel, physical accommodations, and planning geared toward determining and meeting families' needs.

Districtwide parent and community involvement programs also need to embrace the diversity of families in the design of policies, programs, and practices. Policies at any level should contain methods by which all parents, regardless of socioeconomic, linguistic, or literacy backgrounds, can be informed about programs and the progress of their children. Professional development opportunities for staff enhance the effectiveness of any program. Finally, linking the various groups and agencies that support education with both schools and families strengthens the overall partnership (Crump and Ellis, 1995).

The research literature reveals overarching elements that affect the home/school connection in whatever form it takes. Two-way communication surfaces repeatedly as a key to successful partnerships. To improve communication, schools must become more inclusive and creative, taking advantage of electronic media, new parent conferencing techniques, and a knowledge of the local community. Principals, teachers, and district administrators are key players in this partnership. Adequate resources must be available to enable the development and implementation of programs.

Chapter 4

The Impact Of Parent and Community Involvement Programs

Overview

A primary dilemma faced by policymakers and practitioners is establishing strong claims about the outcomes of any program. Typical experimental designs include random assignment of subjects. While the application of these designs is possible in other situations and circumstances, it is usually not possible in studies of educational programs. Without random assignment it is impossible to determine conclusively if the outcomes of a program are the direct result of the program itself.

Studies of educational programs seek to explain why, how, and whether programs work. Their designs attempt to "partition out" the effects of a variable, or set of variables, in order to determine the contribution of certain features to overall program outcomes.

Most often the outcomes of educational programs are the result of the interaction of many complex variables. The interactive nature of these variables is elusive and the ability to make **definitive** statements about their effects on outcomes is problematic. However, considerable research has been done which establishes an **associative link**, or correlation, between school efforts to create partnerships with parents, families, and community members and outcomes for students, parents, school personnel, and schools and school districts:

- School and parent/family/community partnerships are associated with positive effects on **student outcomes**, e.g., higher levels of achievement as measured by standardized test scores; factual, conceptual, critical, and attitudinal aspects of learning (Eccles and Harold, 1993).

- Acquisition of new skills, increased involvement, interaction with their children, and positive self-concept are examples of **parent outcomes** associated with school/family partnerships.

- **Teacher outcomes** associated with partnerships included positive attitudes, the use of varied strategies, and an increased sense of self-efficacy.

- Positive effects for **schools and school districts** were found through the partnerships schools forge with parents/families/communities. An increase in student attendance rates; reductions in dropout, delinquency, and pregnancy rates; and improved discipline practices were associated with these partnerships.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the research related to the outcomes claimed by programs that involve school, parent, family, and community partnerships. As a cautionary note, readers should be aware that the research cited pertains to general outcomes at all levels, **not specifically to the middle grades.**

The Impact of Parent and Community Involvement Programs

Involving parents in the education of their children has been found to be associated not only with students but also with teachers, schools, and districts (Becker and Epstein, 1982b; Comer, 1986; Epstein, 1991a).

In general, the research demonstrates that parents can be powerful contributors to their children's education, both stimulating and reinforcing their children's learning. However, parent involvement should not be viewed as an educational panacea (Ascher, 1987; Brown, 1989).

Student Outcomes. Studies of the effects of parent involvement were almost always measured in terms of student achievement as indicated by grades or even more commonly, by standardized test scores. In most cases, it is difficult to establish causality. It is also impossible to compare results from one study to another to determine which of the activities have had the greatest impact (Zeldin, 1989). Nearly all research reviewed showed that increased parent involvement was consistently associated with positive results (Ascher, 1987).

McLaughlin and Shields (1987) reported that there are two facts that are "fairly well settled" in the literature regarding the link between parent involvement and student achievement. First, students, including students from low SES whose parents are involved in their schools, do better in their academic subjects and are less likely to drop out than those students whose parents are less involved (Stevenson and Baker, 1987; Rood, 1988; Henderson, 1987; Jacob, 1983; Comer, 1984; Walberg, 1984; McCormick, 1989). Second, those schools where parents are well informed and highly involved are most likely to be effective schools (Brandt, 1986; Chubb, 1988; Comer, 1984; Henderson, 1988b; Jacob, 1983; Purkey and Smith, 1983; Walberg, 1984).

Parent outcomes. Parents involved in their children's schools acquire new skills, gain confidence, and improve employment opportunities (Comer, 1984). Further, parents are more likely to increase their involvement over time (Herman and Yeh, 1983), spend more time working with their children at home (Becker and Epstein, 1981 and 1982b; Dauber and Epstein, 1991) and rate teachers higher. However, Chrispeels (1991b) noted that schools implementing programs to encourage home learning may encounter several dilemmas. Research also indicated that home learning programs should not necessarily be limited to parents helping children with academic tasks.

Teacher outcomes. The more frequently teachers were engaged in parent involvement activities, the more positive their attitudes became about parents and the more likely they included parent input in decisions about curriculum development and instructional strategies (Epstein and Becker, 1987).

Teachers who acknowledge the benefits of parent involvement were found to be more likely to overcome obstacles through the use of a variety of parent involvement strategies. They were also more likely to seek training to improve their skills for involving parents in the schools (Becker and Epstein, 1982b; Purnell and Gotts, 1985). In schools where teachers perceived that they, their colleagues, and parents supported parent involvement, programs and practices were stronger (Dauber and Epstein, 1991).

School and district outcomes. Comer (1984) found that those schools with parent involvement have an improved school climate. Further, he asserted that parent involvement in a well-structured and well-managed program helped to eliminate harmful stereotypes that teachers held about the families of the students they taught. Peterson (1989) noted that parent involvement was associated with reduction in drop out, delinquency and pregnancy rates. Involving parents of Black children was successful but there was not much success with Mexican American parents (Armor, et al., 1976).

The positive effects of parent involvement may help to counterbalance the effects of economic disadvantage. As summarized by the U.S. Department of Education (1986), "What parents do to help their children learn is more important to academic success than how well-off the family is."

Summary

While the research on the impact of parent and community involvement programs does not show a definitive causal link, many studies demonstrate a correlation between programs and outcomes. Nearly all of the research shows that these programs are associated with positive student outcomes, including increased student achievement. Parents who participate in these programs were found to have more interactions with their children in their homes and in some cases, to acquire new skills and more positive attitudes toward teachers and schools. Teachers also developed more positive attitudes toward parents, especially as they engaged more often and more directly in the parent involvement activities. School climate also improved.

Long term effects are more difficult to demonstrate. Some researchers suggest a relationship between parent involvement and reduction in dropout, delinquency, and pregnancy rates. Others show a relationship to improved attendance, discipline and long term student achievement. Several researchers caution that the effects of parent involvement may vary based on family socioeconomic status and ethnicity. Much more research is needed in this area to determine exactly what outcomes are produced, under what condition, and what the longer term effects of particular programs and practices are.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Overview

As educators continue to struggle with the questions of how to design the best structures, programs, and practices to meet students' and society's needs, they must consider the most effective ways to create and use partnerships with parents and communities to help accomplish this task. The research literature on parent and community involvement in the middle grades is sparse, but what does exist illuminates some of the challenges and some ways that schools and parents can forge relationships to meet those challenges and produce positive outcomes for students, parents, schools, and society as a whole.

This review of the literature on parent and community involvement and literature related specifically to the middle grades was guided by three questions:

- What are the **contexts** within which parent and community involvement programs operate?

  Context refers to the policy environment; trends and factors influencing parent and community involvement that include: diversity within systems, families, communities and economies; perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs; institutional settings; pre-adolescent and adolescent development.

- What are the **overarching roles** that parents, families, and community members assume in the education of their children?

  Roles of parents and/or community members are described as: a primary resource in the education of their children through participation in home learning activities; supporters and advocates for the education of their children through site-based restructuring efforts at the local level; and participants in the education of all children through districtwide parent involvement programs.

- What are the **effects** of promising programs on parents, students, school staff, schools, and/or school districts?

  Effects of parent involvement programs relate to the outcomes for students, parents, teachers, and schools and school districts.

It is around these questions that the conclusions, implications and recommendations for future research directions are made.

Conclusions

This review of the literature on parent involvement, and literature related specifically to the middle grades has indicated that the following conclusions appear to be warranted. The conclusions are stated in terms of the findings about successful middle grade school/family partnerships and parent involvement efforts.

Successful middle grade school/family partnerships:

- are supported through well-developed policies at the school, district, state, and federal level;
- consider the highly-related trends and factors that influence all school/family partnerships and parent and community involvement programs in the design, plan, and implementation of these programs; trend and factors specific to the middle grades are given priority;
- use parents, families, and community members in appropriate roles through home learning, school restructuring activities, and districtwide involvement programs;
- employ frequent, varied, two-way communication;
- value the roles of key players, such as parents, teachers, school personnel, and community members;
- provide sufficient physical, human, and fiscal resources and training; and
- attempt to measure student, parent, teacher, school and school district outcomes through both formative and summative evaluation methods.

Implications

Policies at various levels can help to inform and institutionalize effective practices. At the school level, policies can suggest the need for reciprocity, local decision making that is responsible to school/community needs, and specific practices such as homework completion standards that may be uniformly required or encouraged. Site-based management practices lead to an even greater need for partnerships and parent involvement based on common goals and understandings. Such policies can also serve to guarantee or at least recommend that sufficient resources are allocated to the programs that have been jointly designed. District policies serve many of the same functions and can also be used to promote equity across schools.
State and federal policies tend to serve other functions and are "top down." However, they serve an important motivating role through both the symbolic and real commitment to the partnership that they make.

The first step in understanding how trends and factors are related involves the development of a knowledge base. Through this knowledge base all key players (parents, teachers, administrators, and community members) can develop an understanding of the rich context in which successful parent involvement programs operate. Parent involvement programs should be designed to be appropriate for the middle grades.

All involved parties should seek to understand and value the diversity that exists within and between them. Varying economic, cultural, and social backgrounds should be used to shed light on circumstances affecting behaviors, beliefs and attitudes of students and home, community, and school partners.

The partnership itself should be viewed strategically, with constituents engaging in discussions designed to achieve consensus on valued goals and student outcomes. Parent and community members should be viewed as co-equals who bring valued expertise on their own children, family, and community needs; teachers and administrators should be viewed as co-equals who bring valued expertise on educational practices and strategies. Together, these groups can work toward achieving the same ends, that is, increased student achievement, positive climate, and other desired goals.

A variety of different practices, programs, and partnerships can be developed and implemented. One of the most promising is the creation of a home learning program. The research suggests that effective home learning programs use multiple methods for recruitment, understand local conditions and practices, and build on parent/family/community strengths.

As parents and family members assume a broader role in education, either by serving as advocates or partners in education or through decision making for restructuring, their information needs increase. To gain insight into the entire community of children and to familiarize themselves with many other aspects of schooling, they need to explore the literature on effective organization, instruction and assessment and legislative, financial and other constraints.

Any parent/community involvement program must have sufficient staff, funding, training, and planning to be successful. Linkage to other schools, recreational centers, social service agencies, health agencies, and other community groups serves a synergistic function, with the children as ultimate beneficiaries.

The paucity of research on parent involvement in the middle grades illustrates what little is known about programs and practices that specifically benefit children during these crucial years in their development. Most of the research is descriptive in nature, so little can be concluded about direct effects.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research on school/family partnerships and parent involvement in education should be directed toward:

- **middle grade education, based on specific roles as schools/families/communities join together to benefit students;**

  Although more attention is being devoted to middle grade education, the knowledge base in both research and practice needs to be expanded. This knowledge base should include a broad range of possibilities that school personnel, parents, families and community members can play in working together. Research and practice should focus on how these roles are facilitated within education and community organizational structures, and how different groups will depend on each other as their members play various roles in building partnerships.

- **both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the context and processes of developing, planning and implementing and middle grade school/family partnerships and parent involvement programs;**

  The sheer variety of family and community systems presents a challenge to partnership building, as do economic differences among the populations served by middle grade schools. Research should give us greater insights into these and other factors affecting partnerships: group culture and beliefs that influence individuals' perceptions of the schooling situation and their attitudes toward it; organizational barriers or supports to active involvement; attitudes of key players toward school/family partnerships; and possible resources, including training strategies and practice. Applied research can be directed to assist in choices of action that take these factors into account. Such action might include targeting specific resources and training toward parents, families, community members or school personnel; improving communication skills among participants or using various media as channels for communication; assigning additional school personnel to link schools more directly with parents, families, and community members; and coordinating services with other community organizations or agencies that work with children, families, and neighborhoods.

- **the challenges to forming middle grade school/family partnerships, and the strategies used to meet those challenges;**

  Research should focus on the challenges of diversity within family, community and economic systems as they affect partnerships; the perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of key players; the institutional setting as a challenge to active involvement; the attitudes and beliefs of key players toward school/family partnerships; and resources and training.

Strategies to meet these challenges are a worthwhile area for future study. These might include: dedicated resources and training for parents, families, community members and school personnel; communication; additional school personnel to directly link schools with parents, families, and community members; and coordination of services.

- **short and long-term potential outcomes of the partnership on students, teachers, schools, school districts and communities.**

  Short-term potential outcomes worthy of study include: higher levels of achievement as measured by standardized test scores; factual, conceptual, and critical aspects of learning; acquisition of new skills for parents and family members; linkages to the curriculum for parents/families and the community including decision making and about what students are learning, and helping students at home; leadership as a catalyst for school/family partnerships; changes in roles for all players; and implementation of successful strategies for involvement. Long-term potential outcomes that merit attention include: improved attitudes about schooling for all participants; the institutionalization of school/family partnerships and empowerment and increased self-efficacy of parents, families, teachers and other school personnel, and community members.

This research review shows that creating partnerships between school, parents, families and communities can provide a promising avenue through which education can be more effective in achieving its goals. As reform efforts continue to grow the education community should be encouraged to explore this potential to its fullest.

STUDY AIMS AND STUDY QUESTIONS

Study Aims

Educational partnerships described in Goals 2000: Educate America Act are intended to foster the types of educational reforms necessary for success in the competitive world market. In this climate of attention to the meaningful involvement of parents and the community, legislators, governors, and public administrators at the state and local levels have also focused on a shift in roles, particularly in the area of increasing access to high quality parent and community involvement.

As a result of the explosion of family involvement activity, state and local education agencies have been grappling with the issues of program development, implementation, and refinement, and some pioneering efforts worthy of examination have begun to emerge. This study was designed to take stock of what we know from more than twenty-five years of research and new initiatives in order to document and analyze useful practices from which others can learn or emulate as they seek to craft school reform efforts.

The original RFP discussed three cross-cutting research themes about the antecedents, stimuli, and context of reform that were addressed in this study:

1. What are the barriers to, and incentives for, reforming parent and community involvement; how may the barriers be overcome or avoided; how may the incentives be effectively used?

2. How is the reform of parent and community involvement supported and effectively implemented, both at the level of implementation and in a larger policy environment?

3. What is the source, nature, and content of information that plays a major role in the reform of parent and community involvement, particularly the role of research-based information? What information has been used during the formulation and implementation process?

Rather than trying to deal with the whole field of parent, family, and community involvement, this study focused on three different research strands: comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement programs, school restructuring, and school-initiated adult-child learning programs. The plan called for studying these focus areas within the context of the middle grades, defined as grades 4-8. Because grades 4 and 5 are typically found in the elementary grades, i.e., grades Prekindergarten through 5, on the recommendation of the Advisory Group we focused our research primarily in schools that contained only grades 6-8.

For each research strand, we targeted the following areas for study:

- Context of programs
- Planning and design
- Current implementation
- Support systems
- Outcomes

For a detailed explanation of each of the research strands and focus areas, see Volume III of this final Technical Report (Rutherford, et al., 1995).

Study Questions

For each research strand we developed a set of questions that were used to guide data collection and analysis. The majority of these questions were stated in the RFP, but we reordered and expanded them to reflect the issues and relationships among specific variables that were described in the conceptual frameworks for each research strand (see Rutherford, et al., 1995). The project Advisory Group and the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative reviewed an initial set of questions and revisions were made prior to their inclusion in the final research plan.

The questions for each of the research strands is listed below. While each of the questions was considered important to the study, some questions received more emphasis than others. Those questions are denoted with an asterisk.

Comprehensive Districtwide Parent and Community Involvement

Context

*1. What is the larger environmental context for comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement programs?

  1.1 What federal and/or state policies or practices have affected the development of comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement programs?

*2. What is the local environmental context for restructuring as it relates to comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement programs?

2.1 What district policies or practices have affected the development of comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement programs?

3. What was the influence of the larger environment on the local environment?

Planning and Design

*4. What were the basic features of the planning process for comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement programs?

4.1 What were the key decisions/events that occurred during planning?

4.2 What were the roles of the key players?

*5. What was the design of the comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement program?

5.1 What types of strategies/activities were included in the initial design; how did their conception evolve?

6. What was the effect of the local environment on planning and design?

Current Implementation

*7. What are the key characteristics of the comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement program that have been implemented by the district?

7.1 What initial districtwide activities were implemented? How similar were the activities to the original design? What accounts for any differences?

7.2 Who has been involved in the implementation of the program activities and what roles do they play?

*8. What have been major barriers to the implementation of comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement programs? What strategies have been used to respond to these barriers?

Support Systems

*9. What external or internal supports were required in the planning, design, and implementation of the comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement program? What supports were most important?

9.1 What were the effects of internal and external supports on the comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement program?

*10. What fiscal or other resources have been used to plan, design, implement, and sustain the comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement program?

 10.1 If extra funds were required, how much extra was needed, what was the source of these funds, and how were they obtained?

Outcomes

*11. What are the effects of the comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement program on:

school-home communication?
new roles for parents in schools?
new roles for schools regarding parents?
new roles for the community in schools?

 11.1 What are the unanticipated effects of the comprehensive districtwide parent and community involvement program on family and community involvement?

School Restructuring and Parent Involvement

Context

*1. What is the larger environmental context for restructuring as it relates to family and community involvement?

 1.1 What federal or state policies or practices have facilitated or inhibited the development of restructuring as it relates to family and community involvement?

 1.2 What funding, if any, was provided for the district/school toward restructuring? What was the source of these funds?

 1.3 What key decisions/events in the larger environment have affected restructuring as it relates to family and community involvement?

*2. What is the local environmental context for restructuring as it relates to family and community involvement?

 2.1 What administrative structures in the local environment exist or were created to facilitate the restructuring effort?

 2.2 What school or district policies have facilitated or inhibited the planning and development of restructuring as it relates to family and community involvement?

2.3 What key decisions/events in the local environment have affected restructuring as it relates to family and community involvement?

2.4 What resources has the school, district, or community provided for the restructuring effort?

3. What was the influence of the larger environment on the local environment?

Planning and Design

*4. What were the basic features of the planning process for restructuring activities? What were the basic features of the planning process for family and community involvement as an aspect or outcome of restructuring?

4.1 Who participated in any planning activities and what was their perception of the problem or issues to be addressed?

4.2 What was the substance of any plan and subsequent revisions?

*5. What was the design of restructuring activities? What was the design of the parent and community involvement program as a strategy or intended outcome of school restructuring?

5.1 What types of strategies/activities were included in the initial design; how did their conception evolve?

5.2 What role, if any, was conceived for family and community involvement in the restructuring effort?

6. What was the effect of the local environment on planning and design?

Current Implementation

*7. What are the key characteristics of the restructuring effort? What are the key characteristics of restructuring as it relates to family and community involvement?

7.1 What initial restructuring activities were implemented? How similar were the activities to the original design? What accounts for any differences?

7.2 Who has been involved in the implementation of the restructuring and family/community involvement activities and what roles do they play?

*8. What have been major barriers to the implementation of restructuring programs as it relates to family and community involvement? What strategies have been used to respond to these barriers?

Support Systems

*9. What internal and external factors or conditions supported the planning, design, and implementation of restructuring and of family and community involvement?

  9.1 How did supports for the overall restructuring activities affect the design and implementation of family and community involvement?

  9.2 What were the effects of internal supports for family and community involvement?

  9.3 What were the effects of external supports for family and community involvement?

*10. What fiscal or other resources have been used to plan, design, implement, and sustain the restructuring as it relates to family and community involvement?

  10.1 If extra funds were required, how much extra was needed, what was the source of these funds, and how were they obtained?

Outcomes

*11. What are the effects of restructuring activities on:

school-home communication?
new roles for parents in schools?
new roles for schools regarding parents?
new roles for the community in schools?

  11.1 What are the unanticipated effects of the restructuring activities on family and community involvement?

Adult-Child Learning Programs (Home Learning)

Context

*1. What is the larger environmental context for adult-child learning programs?

  1.1 What demographic, economic, and historical factors were involved in shaping the design and implementation of these programs and activities?

*2. What is the local environmental context for adult-child learning programs?

  2.1 What district, school policies or practices have facilitated or inhibited the development of school/teacher initiated programs and activities to promote student-family learning?

  2.2 What district, school, and teacher resources were required to implement these programs and activities?

3. What was the influence of the larger environment on the local environment?

Planning and Design

*4. What were the basic features of the planning process for adult-child learning experiences?

4.1 Who participated in any planning activities and what was their perception of the problem or issues to be addressed?

4.2 What was the substance of any plan and subsequent revisions?

*5. What was the design of the adult-child learning program?

6. What was the effect of the local environment on planning and design?

Current Implementation

*7. What are the key characteristics of the program and activities that have been initiated by the school/teachers?

7.1 How similar are these key characteristics to the original design? How have the goals, key characteristics of the program and activities, resources, or anticipated outcomes changed since the program or activities were initiated?

7.2 Who has been involved in the implementation of the program activities and what roles do they play?

*8. What have been the major barriers to the implementation of the program and activities, and how have these been overcome?

Support Systems

*9. What internal or external supports were required in the planning, design, and implementation of these programs and activities?

*10. What resources have been used to plan, design, implement, and sustain these programs and activities?

10.1 If extra funds were required, how much extra was needed, what was the source of these funds, and how were they obtained?

Intermediate Outcomes

*11. What have been the perceived and actual benefits of the program/school-initiated activities on families and school staff?

11.1 How have these benefits been assessed?

11.2 Is it possible to separate the impact of this program/activities from other factors that might affect outcomes for the key players?

Ultimate Outcomes

12. What have been the ultimate outcomes for students in terms of increased skills/knowledge and/or positive attitudes about school and learning?

CASE STUDY SUMMARIES

Comprehensive Districtwide Programs

- **Fort Worth Independent School District**
  Fort Worth, Texas
- **Jefferson County Public Schools**
  Louisville, Kentucky
- **Minneapolis Public Schools**
  Minneapolis, Minnesota

School Restructuring

- **Beck Middle School**
  Georgetown, South Carolina
- **Lamoni Middle School**
  Lamoni, Iowa
- **Shelburne Middle School**
  Shelburne, Vermont

Adult-Child Learning Experiences (Home Learning)

- **Community School District Number 3**
  New York, New York
- **Natchez-Adams Parent Center**
  Natchez, Mississippi
- **Rochester Public Schools**
  Rochester, New York

Fort Worth Independent School District
Fort Worth, Texas

Case Summary

Project C^3 (Communities, Corporations, and Classrooms) is a partnership between the Fort Worth Independent School District, the Chamber of Commerce and other business leaders that provides the organizational framework for restructuring efforts. Project C^3 is a cooperative effort with its origins in community concern over the adequacy of student preparation for the workplace. The purpose of the Project is to operationally define success in the workplace and change the delivery of classroom instruction to link student learning with real world experiences. As a result district performance-based assessments and projects have been developed; the entire community is a "laboratory for learning."

This initiative has produced a number of major programs that affect middle grade students and their parents: Vital Link provides for middle school internships in local businesses; Applied Learning, a curriculum-based effort, focuses on authentic learning, group, and project work; Equity 2000 is a national effort to increase the number of economically disadvantaged and minority students who attend and succeed in college; School Based Decision Making (SBDM) includes teachers, parents and community members in everyday decision making at the school level; and Parent Volunteer Coordinators is a training and resource program to involve parents directly in their children's learning or in school based activities. Individual middle school family involvement initiatives include: Parent University (at two alternative middle schools), a parent work contract, and Parents United with Teachers that involves cooperative decision making, critical thinking, and problem solving between teachers and family members.

> *"The single most effective strategy for mobilizing human resources at all levels can be seen in the partnership symbol...C^3. This symbol means three equal stakeholders working together to build a better place for our young people."*
> *-District publication*

The Vital Link program is a job shadowing experience for middle grade students. Although family members are only indirectly involved - often taking their children to job sites during the summer - the enthusiastic response to the program by middle grade students has caused parents and community members to be strongly supportive of the program.

Equity 2000 involves families and the community in Saturday Academies (tutoring programs), and the Mathematics Institute. Practical Parent Education, a program administered through the district's counseling office, provides parenting workshops and linkages to other community services.

Training for members of the SBDM teams is provided by the district. The principal, three teachers, and three parents elected by the predominant parent group, and one community member serve on the SBDM team. They receive training in goal setting, curriculum budgeting, personnel allocation, and school organization.

The Parent University at the two alternative middle schools contracts with parents for their participation in school/family conferences, development of individual growth plans for their children, and attendance at three parent workshop sessions held during the year.

Many of our informants stated that a key to the success of the reform initiatives in Fort Worth was the result of the leadership of the former Superintendent. In addition to descriptions of his vision of what schools should be, respondents often talked about the "safe, risk-free environment" that he had created. With a change in superintendents scheduled for the summer of 1994, respondents were unsure of how restructuring would proceed.

Lessons

1. *Community members and businesses may serve as change agents in the restructuring process.* Restructuring may be initiated not only from schools/districts, but also from the community at large. In Fort Worth, the business community played a key role in the planning and development of the restructuring initiative.
2. *Cooperation between the district staff and the school board is essential in the restructuring process.*
   District staff frequently mentioned that support from the school board was necessary for implementing reform programs. They credited much of the success of restructuring efforts to the "buy in" of the school board for programs that involved parents/ families and the community.
3. *Leadership at the district level creates a safe, risk-free atmosphere where personnel are free to "experiment" with restructuring initiatives.*
   Personnel felt that the atmosphere in the district had allowed a freedom to be creative, and one where they would not be judged as failures if programs did not succeed. They

were encouraged to "reinvent" new ways of involving families and the community in the educational process.

4. *Responsibility for decision making requires training, both for parents and community members, and for school staff.*

   In Fort Worth's experience with site based decision making, they found that collaborative decision making was an unfamiliar process for all participants. This change in role and responsibility required training in collaborative decision making processes.

Jefferson County Public Schools
Louisville, Kentucky

Case Summary

Historically, Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) has been committed to restructuring. JCPS struggles to understand change and implement policy mandates. The most striking feature of JCPS is a belief system at whose core is the recognition that families, community members and businesses can and do make a difference in education. We found that parents and the community are an integral part of school reform, and that JCPS finds unique ways to translate their beliefs about parent/family and community involvement into action.

In 1990 the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) became law. KERA was significant because it set into place, through legislation, statewide reform. Provisions were made for reform in three areas: curriculum, governance, and finance. The area of curriculum reform established a direct link to family and community involvement through school-based decision making and Youth Services Centers.

JCPS supports parent, family and community involvement initiatives through policies at the district level. Programs to involve families and the community are designed both at the district level and at individual school sites.

> ***"What all this means is that there is probably a continuum - that we need to reattach adults back into the schools...That extends all the way from parents...to the elderly...to our business community. It's powerful. We've got to sustain that somehow."***
>
> ***-Superintendent***

Participatory Management Teams, the Middle Grades Assessment Program, district-mandated school/family conferences, and participation in major national middle school reform efforts sponsored by granting agencies are carefully planned initiatives that the district undertakes to involve parents and families. The 15th District Parent-Teacher Association, with 77,000 members and 140 chapters, supports parent involvement efforts and provides training, both for family members and for district staff related to statewide reform. A second group of initiatives represents partnerships created between JCPS and local businesses that benefit either all schools in the district, or business/school partnerships with middle schools. Partnerships have been created with Humana, Inc., a national health service provider; Louisville Third Century, a group of over

400 businesses; Louisville Education and Employment Partnership; the Kentuckiana Education & Workforce Institute; a unique relationship with a local foundation that has established the district's Professional Development Academy; the Boy Scouts of America; and The Mathematics/Science/Technology Network Partnership through a grant from the United States Department of Education. Each middle school is partnered with a local business that provides services beyond the traditional model of Adopt-A-School.

Schools actively involve parents, families, and community members in the design and implementation of programs. Youth Services Centers, funded through grants provided by the state legislature, serve middle grade students and their families. The Centers provide linkages to local service providers. A regional service center, the Neighborhood Place, operates in one middle school and provides the services of 19 agencies in a "one stop shopping" atmosphere to neighborhood families. A wide variety of strategies and activities are used by schools to involve parents and families, including Parent Centers, creating a welcoming environment, voice mail systems, homework hotlines, newsletters, parenting workshops, and summer programs. Teachers often spoke of meeting student's basic and academic needs through home visits, providing food and clothing to families, organizing instructional activities that involved parents, and communication.

Lessons

1. *Clear goals and policies, coupled with direct funding, provide a framework for successful parent/family and community involvement initiatives.*

   Both state mandates and clearly articulated district goals, when supported by direct funding at the state and district levels, are a key to this successful program.

2. *State mandates can be used to local advantage.*

   JCPS has taken advantage of the reform mandates of KERA to provide comprehensive programs that include multiple opportunities for families and the community to be involved in their children's education.

3. *Coordination and involvement of the community is a key to successful restructuring.*

   Efforts to involve parents and the community are carefully coordinated at the district and school level to reduce duplication of services and provide maximum impact for the restructuring initiatives.

4. *Communication with the larger community is a key to success.*

   The district communicates its goals to families and the community at large on a frequent, on-going basis. This pattern of communication insures support for restructuring efforts.

Minneapolis Public Schools
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Case Summary

The Volunteer Services/Family Partnerships (VS/FP) program in Minneapolis Public Schools falls under the umbrella of curriculum and instruction. The VS/FP is seen as a support system for strengthening student achievement by providing human resources and materials for training parents/families and the community to be advocates for students. A unique feature of the Minneapolis Public Schools is its administrative and organizational structure. Recently, the Minneapolis school board entered into a contract with a local for-profit consulting firm to oversee the 44,000-student district. The contract holds the superintendent (the consulting firm's CEO) and other school officials financially accountable for a set of objectives. One of the highlights of this performance-based contract was to devise a strategy to increase family involvement in schools.

State and local policies support parent, family, and community involvement. In 1989, the Minnesota Department of Education passed a regulation requiring every school district in the state to spend $5 per pupil on parent/family involvement programs and activities. However, these funds were not in addition to a district's regular per pupil allocation. In order to maintain funding, districts had to show how this money was to be used. Rather than cut the district budget to comply with this mandate, Minneapolis Public Schools documented parent/family involvement activities through a districtwide family involvement survey, provided the salary for the VS/FP Coordinator, and funded school social work paraprofessionals.

"...this system forces administrators to examine the necessity, effectiveness, and efficiency of what they are doing."

"...this is a state requirement without any state funding, thus making the state look supportive."
-Program Coordinator

Because of district reorganization, many of the parent and community involvement initiatives that have been started are "on hold" as some respondents put it. For example, the recommendations from the Minneapolis School Family Partnership Plan have not been fully implemented; program staff were unsure if the recommendations were viable ways to move forward. In the short term, parent, family, and community involvement efforts appear to be fragmented.

Even though the district has experienced organizational difficulties, there are programs that have remained strong and successful. Directed by the VS/FP Coordinator, the Parent Institute and the Partnership for School Success are programs that directly affect middle grade families. The Parent Institute provides a 28-hour series of workshops to train parent and family members to assume leadership and advocacy roles in schools. The Institute began with a small number of parents, but was designed as a trainer-of-trainers model; parents serve as workshop leaders to involve and train other middle grade parents/families to become advocates for their children. The Partnership for School Success is a federally funded dropout prevention program that operates in three middle schools. A full-time resource teacher coordinates program activities that include sensitivity training for teachers; home visits; and school-based parent/family involvement programs, such as the Parent Worker Program and tutoring/mentoring programs. The Partnership for School Success has worked with The League of Schools Reaching Out to form Action Research Teams that identify and work on areas for improvement.

Lessons

1. *Within an "enterprise system" of education, program success may depend on the ability of program personnel to "sell" parent, family, and community involvement as a viable support for restructuring.*

   The administrative performance-based contract sets up a system of competition between restructuring initiatives. If school sites do not choose to "buy" program services, program funding may be discontinued.

2. *In the absence of direct funding, policy mandates provide minimal support for restructuring initiatives.*

   The mandate for parent and family involvement from the state Department of Education does not provide additional funding to districts to implement family partnership programs.

3. *Successful districtwide programs provide training for parents as they assume new roles and responsibilities.*

   As parents and family members assume new roles and responsibilities, especially those that involve decision making, training is a necessary component to ensure success.

4. *Changes in roles for parents, families and community members may be perceived as a threat to school personnel.*
   School administrators have traditionally operated under a model of autonomous decision making. Including parents and community members in the decision making process may be perceived as a threat to autonomy and the locus of control in schools.

Beck Middle School
Georgetown, South Carolina

Case Summary

Project REACH (Rural Education Alliance for Collaborative Humanities) is a statewide project in South Carolina that has received funds from several sources. One of its exemplary sites in the state is Beck Middle School, located in Georgetown. Since its initiation at Beck in 1987, REACH appears to have multiple and significant impact on the instructional program and the kinds and level of family and community involvement. REACH and other efforts to involve families and to improve community relations at Beck have created a situation where many families are aware of and participate in their children's school, as policy advisers, informants, workers, and sometimes co-learners.

An important point emphasized by those most involved with REACH is that it is a design for a process and for creating activities that promote self-reflection, a sense of community, and promote the development of skills and thoughtfulness while focusing on one's own interests and history. It is not a set of steps or a program, and its form will differ from school to school, class to class, and to some extent, student to student.

> *"...you have to try to give the ideas of the project without immediately getting into the 'what' of the work; you have to get the 'why' down really firmly before you do the 'what.' Now, you can't take these beliefs to another school and just graft them on, or tell them how to do activities that will make those beliefs happen."*
>
> *-State REACH Consultant*

Although Georgetown is in some ways a small southern town, the district and school staff believe that they see some of the same problems that one would see nationally, e.g., more violence among young people. "Beck is not a melting pot but there is more diversity" than in other schools in the district. REACH activities focus on pocket communities - "little communities within communities" - and students research and investigate each culture represented in those communities.

There are a variety of efforts other than REACH underway in the school, and many of them reflect a concern with community involvement and family issues.

- Eagle Training is a 6th grade program offered during the recess time. Students choose to do various projects of their own interest. Community members come into classes, for example, a police department representative, an artist, or a storyteller.
- Student Assistance Program is an outreach effort to help provide guidance to students who have or might have some problems in the area of drugs, alcohol, or emotional issues.

- There is a strong volunteer program, with a coordinator. One element is the Mentor program, viewed as a successful and "super" program, in which community members take responsibility to work with individual students.
- An At Risk Program exists for students who aren't adjusting well to school or who are in danger of not doing well, or just children whose parents have elected to have them in this program.
- The school has initiated a ropes course called Project Adventure to promote teamwork, communication, and decision-making skills among staff, students, and their families.
- International Paper, other industries, and other community groups have programs to work with the school, including long term scholarship relationships with individual students, grants to science classes, tours of the plants, and availability of local employees to come to the school.

There are many participants in REACH activities, and they play various roles. The principal and administrators play a supportive role for the project, practically and symbolically. The core REACH team plays a key organizing and coordinating role. REACH teachers include anyone who wants to participate. School staff implement REACH activities schoolwide and in their classrooms, as well as extending from the model in additional instructional practices. Students are the key workers in all REACH projects, doing the research, writing, constructing and performing, and presenting. Families and community member are informants, workers, planners, and sometimes classroom resources.

Lessons

1. *Restructuring is the outgrowth of a shared vision and a deep understanding of the philosophy of change.*

   It is crucial to understand that a shared vision is something that gets constructed over time. Projects, themselves, do not create school change; participants must understand why restructuring is necessary before implementing change strategies and activities.
2. *The presence of an active and successful core team appears central to the success of restructuring.*

   The presentation of REACH as an opportunity and a model for change seems very important in the diffusion of the idea, by avoiding the "forced" change that many teachers would resent.

3. *It takes an effective school community to make parent, family and community involvement happen.*
   Distinctions between instructional practice and family involvement are minimized; teachers create a shared culture that includes incorporating family knowledge and experience.

Lamoni Middle School
Lamoni, Iowa

Case Summary

Principal restructuring efforts at Lamoni Middle School have been the creation of the middle school itself and the attempt of its faculty over the last several years to evolve and implement their understanding of the principles supporting progressive middle schools. Community involvement and a partnership with parents and families in serving the needs of early adolescents has been a central part of that understanding. At the same time, the Lamoni schools have a long tradition of support and engagement from the various groups in the local community. Both school staff and community members believe that a key foundation for that involvement is the small size of the community and the schools.

Every informant with whom we spoke about the Lamoni schools cites the small size of the community and the schools as a crucial factor in the involvement of parents and in the perceived success of the school system. Parents and community members are able and consistently do maintain relationships and communication channels with school staff outside of the school campus: at the stores, at church, at family gatherings, and frequently just by calling up a teacher at home to simply chat about their child's progress. Conversely, teachers at the middle school are particularly active in telephoning parents and community members about their children, about their perspective on the middle school program, and to request participation in school-organized activities.

> ***"Parent, family, and community involvement is natural in this environment."***
> ***-Middle School Teacher***
>
> ***"It is a common thing in Lamoni to involve parents and community."***
> ***- Parent***

The context in which initial consideration of the establishment of a middle school was considered was the concern of a number of parents about the social interactions between children in seventh and eight grades and students in higher grades as they all shared the facility and organization of the high school.

A citizen's task force was formed to examine the alternatives. This group incorporated community members and school district assistance. Researchers attended conferences and meetings to investigate the various ideas, and sought out reports from other schools in the region that had gone to the middle school structure or tried others of the alternatives that the task force was considering. The task force reported to a community meeting at which a lively debate occurred. After a long meeting, there appears to have been general agreement of the course of action, to restructure to a middle school.

The implementation of the middle school concept since establishment of the school seems to have emphasized instructional and curricular integration and innovation. The process has been less focused and less consistently innovative in structures and programs for personal development, such as the teacher-advisory groups. All our informants note that the nature of communication in Lamoni is such that students receive the personal attention they need. If there are problems or when children need more than the school or family can provide, referrals are made to other community services.

Lessons

1. *Parent, family and community involvement is part of the instructional philosophy and operational program.*

   This integrated view of parent and community involvement is partly due to the "middle school approach" as it is understood in the school and the community, and partly due to the size of the community in which the school is situated.

2. *The school retains the responsibility to initiate and maintain effective school/family and community relations and involvement.*

   The community will let the schools know when they don't seem to be doing enough in this regard, and will reward the system with support when they are.

3. *Operational principles are necessary to make restructuring with parent involvement happen.*

   We discovered six "understood" principles of school restructuring:

   - The core of restructuring is instruction and curriculum;
   - Those conducting restructuring must work as a team;
   - Adequate resources and school structures allow the team to implement restructuring;
   - Restructuring involves a willingness and ability to experiment;
   - Schools must clarify that students are learning "the basics" in new ways, with new forms of instruction;
   - Pursue formal and informal communication with parents and families to get their opinions about the course of school change.

Shelburne School District
Shelburne, Vermont

Case Summary

Shelburne Middle School houses a program serving grades 4-8 and Kindergarten in Shelburne, Vermont, a small community located immediately south of Burlington. It is contained within the Shelburne School District, which also contains the Village School. That district is itself part of a larger district, the Chittenden South Supervisory District, which operates the high school and coordinates Shelburne and other member districts in the area.

Chittenden South Supervisory District has been at the forefront of a number of school restructuring efforts. It has been cited nationally for its efforts to integrate technology into schooling, a focus on individualized learning, innovative grade and curricular structures, and its specification of "Essential Learnings." For many years, Shelburne Middle School has participated in some of the restructuring initiated by the district, particularly elements of the districts promotion of interdisciplinary learning. At the same time, Shelburne has been consistently noted as an exemplary middle school in the state and region due to the academic achievements of its students as well as innovative local programs.

Shelburne is a politically and culturally conservative community in many respects. When it comes to schooling, residents show great interest in the success and reputation of the schools, particularly the middle school. The image of the school is of an academically successful institution.

> *"...there certainly was a potential there for [student] excellence that was untapped. And the parents were feeling that, and they were very angry that...this had been put into place overnight ...with no community involvement, no discussion, no warning."*
>
> *-Parent*

Although the Chittenden South district had been pursuing restructuring goals since the early 1980s, implementation of those ideas at Shelburne Middle School had been selective and "sparse" (as one informant put it) until recently. There were some difficulties perceived with this limited enactment of school reform. The perception among school administrators is that parents/families did not object to reform efforts, but wanted the school to provide skills and be implemented according to high standards.

A new initiative to clarify restructuring goals and plans to the community was undertaken by the schools. Recognition of this need was confirmed by focus groups conducted with approximately 75 randomly selected parents from the community. Parental involvement and general community concern have been channeled into and solicited by the middle school in a number of ways. A wide range of meetings, forums, "coffees" with the principal, and other communication activities were developed by the school in the past two or three years. A parent advisory group is in operation.

The thrust of planning has been to change the program to a nine year system divided into three year communities which guarantee the parent/family that the child will learn all that he needs to learn and that it will be done through the use of personalized education plans. The school board has established a "families as partners" policy as one of the implementation features.

Restructuring at Shelburne is thus very much in process. Major changes have been implemented on an interim or starting basis, but the process of school improvement is continuing, especially in light of the upcoming change in the school facility and structure. As was the case two or three years ago, community concern is high, and involvement opportunities are being provided in response.

Lessons

1. *High community concern and involvement with school does not necessarily lead to easy relations or successful restructuring of the instructional program.*

   Although the school has made extraordinary efforts for sharing information and establishing communication channels in the community, there still remains some confusion about restructuring.

2. *Parent/family support is developed when they actively participate with school administrators to plan, review and have input into the instructional program.*

   Parents/family members participate on school teams, but restructuring efforts are still in the process of developing support and identity among school constituencies.

3. *Restructuring of schools is often chosen as the arena for political struggles.*

   Genuine differences of principle and goals in the community regarding education and the role of the school in determining the community culture may be creating a situation of competing ideological conflict in Shelburne.

Community School District 3
New York City, New York

Case Summary

School District 3 in New York City is a wonderful mosaic of people and programs. The district features parent involvement activities that address parent/child learning activities, parent education, parents as decision makers, and parents as advocates. It took five years and a charismatic leader with a long range plan to make the program work. Keys to success include an approach that emphasizes vertical integration with the home, school, social service agencies, cultural centers, and other resources within the larger community; horizontal integration among and between schools and programs that is developmental in nature, recognizing that as children and families mature, their needs change; and individualization of programs, emphasizing knowledge of individual parents and meeting individual and group needs.

In 1988, the district "reinvented" education for middle grade students, offering them a choice of approaches that included schools-within-schools, magnet schools, and other choices. Family partnership initiatives also began in 1988. A Parent Involvement Program office was established and a new director and staff were appointed. This group contacted each school and organized groups within the schools to determine what the optimal approach to parent involvement should be. They determined that it was important to meet not only the children's needs, but those of families. They instituted programs for adult/child learning in the home, and for parent education. All programs were planned to be directly responsive to expressed interests.

> *"The more parent involvement there is, the more teachers are aware of parents and what they are really like...They were just imagining (negative) relationships when there were not any at all."*
>
> *-School Neighborhood Worker*

The office hired two people to work in each school for parent involvement, and three staff to work as neighborhood liaisons for the schools. Each staff member strives to create a family type atmosphere to make parents feel welcome. This goal was furthered through the training of all school personnel on parent involvement goals, including school secretaries and security guards. Parents are connected to the larger community to have their social service, health, and other basic needs met. The Parent Involvement Program office also offers adult education courses to help parents get their GEDs to enhance their employability. Other workshops are designed to meet perceived district needs. These included workshops on conflict resolution, adolescent behavior, and gang resistance. Leadership programs for parents are also offered, and significant guidance is given by the Parent Involvement Program office staff.

Family partnerships in the middle grades are not the same as with elementary grades. Parents and family members are less apt to volunteer in the school or even to work with their children at home. The reasons given are that children need to take more responsibility for their own education, and that the presence of parents in the schools would only serve as a source of embarrassment for the child. Parents instead choose to become more involved in adult education and advocacy opportunities at this time. This is seen as part of the developmental cycle of the family.

Lessons

1. *Family and community partnerships are viewed as a "system."*

   Adult/Child Learning Activities were considered as a first step to be used to engage parents' interest in becoming involved with the school; they are insufficient in and of themselves to sustain long term involvement and meet families' needs.

2. *This system must attempt to integrate schools, families, and the community both "vertically" and "horizontally."*

   Vertical connections exist between the home, school, and community; the Parent Involvement Program often acts as a link to other service providers. Horizontal integration occurs over the "life cycle" of schooling; parents are able to see important instructional goals for their children as they move from grade to grade.

3. *The partnership system has relatively clear developmental aspects.*

   The nature of school/family partnerships changes as both children and families mature. District 3 responded to these developmental changes by providing a variety of activities to meet the evolving needs of the families it serves.

4. *Partnerships are established with the district as a whole.*

   Parents/families are linked to the district through their participation in the program; schools serve as a set of resources for parents to further their children's achievement, their own individual achievement, or the achievement of the whole family.

Natchez-Adams School District
Natchez, Mississippi

Case Summary

The Natchez-Adams Parent Center serves Chapter 1 students and their families. The Parent Center focuses its efforts on involving parents/families in their children's academic progress. Staff at the center have developed a set of procedures which includes participation from students, parents, teachers, and Center staff. These procedures are responsive to a children's needs when they are having difficulty mastering skills taught in the classroom.

The first procedural step is a school/family conference. During the conference the teacher explains the area in which in the child is having difficulty and completes a Parent Assistance Form (known in the district as a "green sheet"). This form indicates the skill the teacher would like the student to work on in the next six week period (e.g., long division). The parent then takes the green sheet to the Parent Center. Staff at the Center provide materials which promote skills in the needed area. They also demonstrate to the parent how to use the materials with their child. Materials are checked out, so parents and children can work at home. Materials typically include games, manipulatives and puzzles, and focus on activity-based learning. Parents can continue to check out materials for as long as they wish to work with their child. After a parent has attended the Center, a follow-up form is sent to the referring teacher informing them of the parent's visit.

> *"We wanted parents and families to become actively involved in the education of their child. We thought that if we taught parents how to work with the child at home, then we would be making some inroads into parent and family involvement..."*
> *-Program Coordinator*

When a teacher is having difficulty contacting a parent or the parent is not attending conferences, the teacher can request Parent Center staff to do a home visit. The teacher completes a "yellow form" and Center staff visit the family to encourage parents to meet with the teacher and use the resources in the Parent Center. Parents can also attend workshops through the Parent Center which is open year-round. Topics range from discipline and building self-esteem to providing assistance with academic subjects. In addition, families can check out computers and software selected for the specific needs of the child. When parents participate in a workshop or check out a computer, the child's teacher is informed of this participation.

Lessons

1. *Programs evolve over time; original program purposes and goals may be modified or replaced when new needs arise.*

   Linking parents and families to agencies that provide basic family needs was the original purpose of the Parent Center. Over time, parents began to request help with home activities geared toward improving student academic success.

2. *Staff development is a key component of adult/child learning activities.*

   Consistent, on-going staff development provides program staff with the tools and strategies necessary to effectively involve parents and family members in learning activities at home with their children.

3. *Successful adult/child learning programs provide parents and families with the necessary knowledge and skills that enable them to work directly with their children on instructional tasks.*

   Program staff provide both training and materials to parents that increase the capacity of family members to work with their children at home on instructional tasks.

4. *Successful adult/child learning activities are closely linked to the classroom instructional program.*

   Center staff and teachers remain in constant contact, through the use of the referral process, to link home learning activities with the instructional needs of the child and the objectives set by teachers.

5. *Activities and practices may need to change as students and families mature and enter the middle grades.*

   Resource needs may change as children and families mature. The middle school students have not used the Parent Center for checking out skill building packets as much as the elementary students. However, the demand for computers to be checked out through the Parent Center has been high demand for older students, possibly because computers are a better match developmentally for older student's learning.

Rochester City School District
Rochester, New York

Case Summary

Enthusiasm for an alternative learning approach and parents and children actively working together are the hallmarks of the Parent/Child Basic Learning Program in Rochester. The Parent/Child Basic Learning Program began with the adoption of Family Math - a nationally recognized program that links students and parents/family members in joint learning activities. Building on success, the concepts of Family Math were used by program staff to develop Family Reading and Family Science. Megaskills and a Parent Academy were added to provide parent/family training and support. Although the Parent/Child Basic Learning Program primarily serves elementary and early middle grade students and parents, there may be benefits for older middle grade students and parents/families as well.

An initial needs assessment was conducted prior to the development of the Parent/Child Basic Learning Program. The assessment indicated that parents were interested in supporting their children in school. By adopting a family partnership program that directly linked parents/families to student's learning, district officials felt that the direct outcomes would be academic success and a better-educated workforce in the future.

"...parents see the program as an opportunity to give a stable educational experience to their child in one of these subject areas and they want to get involved...and they do."

"I think the payoff will be in the later grades because these children will have developed a positive attitude about education."

-Program Administrator

Teachers and paraprofessionals work as a team in each school that participates in the program. Paraprofessionals are responsible for recruiting families. Teachers develop learning activities for the sessions. They use strategies which differ drastically from traditional teaching methods. Staff believe activities should be fun, engaging, and offer children an opportunity to learn important concepts they may not grasp in their regular classroom. Monthly staff meetings typically involve sharing ideas for new learning activities. Activities are developed based on student needs, upcoming testing, teacher input, and parent homework help requests. Based on the success of Family Math, Family Reading and Family Science were added as components of the Parent/Child Basic Learning Program. A Parent Academy was designed to help parents learn the basic academic content which their child is expected to know for each grade, to help parents find out if their child is learning this content, to give assistance in asking the right questions at school/family conferences, and to give assistance in providing a quality educational experience for their children within the district. The largest portion of funding for this program comes from state adult education monies. The district is reimbursed, based on adult attendance, for providing adult learning situations. This nontraditional funding source has allowed the Parent/Child Basic Learning Program to continue and grow in a district faced with severe budget cuts.

Lessons

1. *Look to non-traditional sources for funding.*

   The use of the state adult education funds have provided the bulk of the funding for the Parent/Child Basic Learning Program.

2. *Expand/enhance a program that has proven successful in other locations.*

   The developers of the Parent/Child Basic Learning Program continued to use the same successful structure of the Family Math program to develop Family Reading and Family Science. Megaskills and a Parent Academy were added to the program to support the family partnership initiative.

3. *Staff enthusiasm toward the program significantly contributes to success.*

   We consistently observed an excitement for the activity-based learning used in the Parent/Child Learning Program. This attitude was reflected in all the workings of the program and most importantly in the interactions with families.

4. *Programs that work with younger children will not work in the same way with older children due to developmental changes in the children and the family's response to these changes.*

   Although the Parent/Child Basic Learning Program had not been implemented in the upper middle grades, administrators expressed a belief that the program would need to be designed and implemented with different strategies and activities to be successful with older children and their families.

5. *Creating opportunities for parents and children to work together has a strong impact on children's success in school.*

   Informal evaluation information from the Parent/Child Basic Learning Program indicated that students who participated in the program improved their letter grades, as judged by classroom teachers, and norm-referenced test scores. However, the structure of learning opportunities must be responsive to the developmental stages of the both the student and the parents/families as they work together.

CROSS-SITE ANALYSIS

Reforming Schools, Transforming Partnerships

Parent, Family, and Community Involvement in the Middle Grades

We realized that not only had the school changed,
but also that we had changed in the process.
- Middle School Principal

Introduction

In 1983 *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative of Educational Reform* focused national attention on the condition of education in the United States and called for sweeping educational reform. States, local education agencies, and schools began reform efforts that have continued throughout the past decade. Many of these reforms were successful; some were not. Some documentation of these successes existed in the research literature; many remained well-kept secrets.

In 1991 the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, United States Department of Education, issued a call for proposals for twelve studies of topics considered to be critical to education reform. Included among those topics was parent and community involvement. While there is a great deal of anecdotal evidence and data from the elementary school level to demonstrate the effect of parent and community involvement on children's academic performance, less is known about how these relationships are played out at the middle level of schooling. We focused our research on grades six through eight.

Forty-two months ago, we began our study of established and promising examples of middle grade school, family, and community partnerships in education. These partnerships are defined by the activities and strategies in which schools and families engage; they imply shared responsibilities for both schools and families. (For a detailed topology of school/family partnerships, see Epstein, 1995). Our conceptual framework included three distinct research focus areas: comprehensive districtwide programs, school restructuring, and adult/child learning experiences.

Comprehensive districtwide programs include ways that school districts, families and communities interact to improve education for all children. Both restructuring and adult/child learning experiences may be "nested" within the comprehensive districtwide program.

School restructuring focuses on fundamental school change, i.e., the ways that parents, families and community members are involved as schools transform their curriculum and instructional and organizational patterns.

Adult/child learning experiences refers to experiences at home (e.g., the completion of homework, leisure reading, family discussions, educational games, and/or enrichment activities) facilitated by the school and/or teacher through school-initiated activities, phone calls, and written materials sent to the home. Adult/child learning experiences focus on the relationship between student and parent/family member as it relates to improved student academic performance.

Through these focus areas we predicted that we would find clear-cut examples of how these partnerships impacted school reform. We were not disappointed. Not only were schools transformed, but also the relationships among all stakeholders were changed as they participated in reform efforts.

During the spring and summer of 1994, we visited nine school districts throughout the United States: Fort Worth Independent School District, Forth Worth, TX; Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, Kentucky; Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Chittenden South School District, Shelburne, Vermont; Georgetown Public Schools, Georgetown, South Carolina; Lamoni Public Schools, Lamoni, Iowa; Community School District Number 3, New York City; Natchez-Adams County Schools, Natchez, Mississippi; and Rochester Public Schools, Rochester, New York.

The districts we selected represented large urban centers, rural communities, suburban areas, multiethnic populations and student populations considered to be economically and educationally disadvantaged. We conducted 18 site visits to these nine districts and we visited 14 schools within those districts. We collected over 50 hours of audiotape interviews with respondents that included school personnel, parents/families, students, community members, and business leaders. We reviewed volumes of written materials provided by our sites. Finally, we synthesized our findings into nine case studies (see Volume II of this Final Technical Report, Rutherford, et. al, 1995).

Each of the sites presented unique lessons for school/family partnerships, as did all sites within a focus area. However, across all nine case studies, eight primary themes emerged. In the process of distilling these eight themes, we learned a great deal about educational reform. This report details our cross-case analysis of the themes and reform as a context for school, family, and community partnerships.

Eight Themes of Middle Grade Parent, Family, and Community Involvement

The eight themes that we identify here are the result of a synthesis and analysis of our findings from site visits to nine school districts across the United States. Each site is attempting to make fundamental changes in the ways that they have done business in the past. Our research focused on three areas of middle grade school, family, and community partnerships: comprehensive districtwide programs; school restructuring; and adult/child learning experiences. Three sites were chosen for each of the focus areas. The three comprehensive district wide program sites are undergoing major changes at the district level and have involved parents, families, community members, and businesses in their reform efforts. School restructuring sites are using middle grade philosophy and concepts to move toward different organizational, and sometimes physical, structures. Sites that focus on adult/child learning experiences are providing training and materials for parents to use at home with their middle grade students.

Reform as a Context for Middle Grade Partnerships

Our study focused on the ways that parents, families, and communities are involved in middle grade education, specifically within school districts and schools that are participating in reform. While each of the sites provided valuable lessons about how parents, families, community members, and businesses are involved in middle grade reform, we cannot ignore what we learned about the process of reform. This was especially true of the school restructuring sites, since the focus of our research in these sites was on how parents, families, and communities were involved in reform initiatives.

Across the nine sites, we identified five common characteristics of school districts and schools that are in the process of reform. The first common characteristic is that ***the meaning for reform is constructed as stakeholders participate in the process***. Middle grade school reform may take many forms: moving toward the concepts of middle schools (for example, interdisciplinary units, team teaching, the concept of "families", and multiage grouping), reorganizing grade configurations, or implementing new instructional programs and teaching methods, among others. However, we found that the schools that we visited had constructed some common meanings, most often translated into operational principles, as they participated in reform. Participants in the reform process articulated six organizational principles of school reform:

- The core of reform is curriculum and instruction.
- School reform is not a "haphazard string of events or coincidences"; reform efforts must be coordinated; those working on reform must work as a team.
- Adequate resources and school structures allow the team to implement reform.
- Reform involves a willingness and ability to experiment.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

- Schools must clarify new or proposed curricular and pedagogical approaches.
- Frequent formal and informal communication with all stakeholders about reform efforts is critical for success.

The second characteristic of reform is that *successful reform initiatives are guided by a strong vision of what students and the school district or school should "look like," and are grounded in a deep understanding of the change process.* Teachers, administrators, and parents and families in the schools that we visited were guided by an idea of what they wanted their students to be able to do when they left the middle grades. They frequently talked about the organizational structure of the school that would allow students to succeed. Many of our respondents talked about the necessity of "knowing what you want to do", comprehensive planning, frequent monitoring of the process to make needed changes, and the fact that change takes time and is not always easy. However, a shared vision for middle grade schools and students made it possible to overcome many of the challenges that faced them.

Third, *strong policies support reform efforts*. Our respondents made it clear that strong policies *do not guarantee* successful reform. However, reform efforts are weakened in the absence of policies. In most of our sites, policies support the efforts of school districts and schools as they participate in reform.

Fourth, in successful reform initiatives, *the school is viewed as a "community*." In our sites, we found that the majority of stakeholders spoke of a "teaching and learning community." Teachers feel that they are not only a part of a teaching community, but also constantly learn as they interact with students and their parents. Administrators spoke of "guiding the teaching and learning process." Families and community members felt that they were a part of "making teaching and learning" happen in new, unique ways.

Finally, *school reform is often an arena for political struggle*. Political and ideological agendas often cause friction between schools and their constituents. When there are differences between the agenda of the school and the agenda of parents, families, and community members, schools become the site for public confrontation over the role of the school in the community. Most often the confrontation is a result of genuine differences in educational philosophy. Although parent, family, and community partnerships strengthen reform efforts, we found that active involvement does not necessarily mean that the road to restructuring will be a smooth one.

The Eight Themes

During our site visits, we listened to the voices of students, parents, family members, community members, and business leaders as they spoke about middle grade partnerships. Their stories form a work in progress; each of the sites experienced both successes and challenges. None felt that the task of middle grade reform was complete.

Eight primary themes emerged from our conversations. We found that as students, parents, family members, and the community participate in education reform, these partnerships change both the school and those who participate in the reform process. In this section, we detail these eight themes and discuss the key approaches our sites used to address these themes.

The critical nature of the middle grades

Although the middle years are often characterized as a period of transition, most of the middle grade practitioners we talked with indicated that the middle grades are much more than a simple transition from elementary school to high school. Many teachers talked about dispelling the myth that the middle grades were simply a "holding pattern" for students. In fact most talked about the middle grades as a "watershed" in education. Teachers and administrators felt that they could influence a full range of students' choices and decisions (e.g., peer groups, gang membership, drug/alcohol use, curriculum and course choices) more during the middle grades than at any other time.

It is during the middle grades that parents and other family members often look to the school for help in dealing with personal and educational choices, and adolescent behavior. Some parents and families feel that the middle grade years are a time when their influence over their children wanes substantially. This loss of control over a child's personal choices often leads to conflict between parents and other family members and the adolescent. Some parents and families do not experience such personal conflict; even these families have concerns around finding a balance between independence and autonomy for the adolescent, and helping their child make appropriate educational choices.

Students express a desire to be independent, yet the commonly held belief that adolescents do not want their parents and families to be involved in their education was not supported in our fieldwork. Most of the adolescents we talked with wanted personal contact with, and support from, an adult. They most often viewed the involvement of their parents and families as being for the good of a larger group of students, for example, their class or grade level, rather than personally beneficial. Although they wanted their parents and families to be involved, many times they qualified how they wanted the involvement to look. Students are aware that the choices they are making have serious personal consequences. Educational choices are more important to older middle grade students who are beginning to explore career options than to younger adolescents.

Community members and business leaders often view the middle grades as a more "visible" time for adolescents. During the middle grades, parents and families begin to allow children to go to public places, for example, shopping centers or malls, either alone or in small groups. The middle grades are also a time when the community begins to see the adolescent population as consumers, with the ability to make independent decisions about purchasing goods and services. Community and business leaders expressed a desire to be involved in partnerships with schools that allow students to experience the "real world of work" and the responsibilities of participating in community life.

Key Approaches:

- **Schools create programs that respond to the unique needs of middle grade families and students.**

  Most often schools have the primary responsibility for planning, design, and implementation of specific programs dealing with the needs of adolescents and their families. For example, all of our sites were moving toward "middle school concepts and philosophy." We observed small group interactions (often referred to as "families"), integrated curriculum, and team teaching. These strategies appeared to provide a "bridge" between elementary school and more fragmented approaches of secondary schools by allowing for more independence and greater choices in curriculum. At the same time, these strategies provided structure and individual attention needed by middle grade students. In two of our sites the Effective Parenting Information for Children (EPIC) program was adopted. EPIC provides workshops for parent and families that deal with issues specifically related to adolescence. Family Reading, Family Math, Family Science and district-created programs such as Saturday Academies and the Parent

Institute provided opportunities for middle grade families to interact and become actively involved as advocates for their children.

- **Schools and communities provide positive interventions for middle grade students.**

  In both Fort Worth, TX, and Louisville, KY, partnerships were formed between the school district and the business community. In Fort Worth the Vital Link program creates mini-internships for middle grade students in area businesses. Louisville's Job Shadowing Program allows middle grade students to "shadow" an employee and discuss job duties, responsibilities, and requirements. Both students and employers reported increased respect and understanding. In Lamoni, IA, and Georgetown, SC students and community members have frequent opportunities to interact through school-community sponsored fairs, exhibitions, and student performances.

- **Parents engage middle grade students in active decision making.**

  In interviews with parents we found that they wanted to remain connected to their children's lives. They often discussed both personal and educational choices with their children. Frequently, middle grade parents involved their children in discussions where decisions were made that affected the entire family.

Challenges can create opportunities for involvement

The middle grades are a time of physical and emotional changes for adolescents. Students report that communication with their parents changes. There is less verbal communication about how they feel, and about school in general. Mood swings often dictate the frequency and intensity of communication. Teachers spoke of the "adolescent growth spurt" and its effects on student self-concept and self-esteem; teachers seem to adopt an attitude of "patient waiting" for communication between themselves and their students. Parents of middle grade students report feelings of frustration in communicating with their children; the change from willing and frequent communication to reticent, and in some cases, non-existent, communication is often abrupt.

At the same time that adolescents experience physical and emotional changes, the structure of middle grade education changes. Students move from an elementary school, with one teacher as the single point of contact for parents and family members, to a middle grade configuration with as many as seven teachers. Younger middle grade students spoke about feeling disoriented and/or overwhelmed; however, as middle grade schooling becomes more routine, these feelings of fragmentation are of less concern. To compound these organizational changes, we found some teachers who, like their secondary counterparts, were more focused on the subject they taught, rather than academic success of the children. Middle grade parents indicated in some cases, that they spent an inordinate amount of time and energy trying to communicate with the school. Middle grade schools also increase both curricular and extra-curricular choices for students, their parents, and families. Many of the middle grade parents with whom we spoke, who themselves may be educationally disadvantaged, reported that the increasing complexity of the middle grade curriculum made it difficult to understand what their child was learning at school, or to help them at home.

Changes during adolescence, and changes in the organization and curriculum of middle grade schools pose formidable challenges for partnerships. We also found that they simultaneously created opportunities for parent and family partnerships with the schools. Schools find new ways to communicate with parents and families and transform organizational and curricular challenges into opportunities for new and unique partnerships. Parents and families find new roles in middle grade schools and, as advocates, accept greater responsibilities, not only for their own children, but also for children throughout the school.

Key approaches:

- **Schools use parents as resources in the middle grades.**

  We found that these promising programs viewed parents and family members as a valuable resource, for both curricular and extracurricular support. We observed parents serving as volunteers, as tutors, and as mentors. Teachers reported that they frequently used parents as curricular resources; often parents were asked to serve as discussants on particular topics in which they had expertise.

- **Schools create structures that decrease fragmentation caused by the organizational arrangement of the school.**

  As we mentioned earlier, schools often create homeroom "families" - small groups of students assigned to one professional or paraprofessional in the school. Not only are academic challenges discussed, but also issues that affect students personally. In several schools we visited, teams of teachers shared responsibility for student welfare, often "sharing" these students throughout their middle grade careers.

- **Parents support middle grade student academic success.**

  Although many of the parents in the sites we visited were educationally disadvantaged, they expressed a desire to help heir children academically. A common practice in our sites was to provide training for parents in strategies to support school efforts. For parents who lacked academic skills, this most often translated into workshops on how to monitor home activities, how to show a child that the work they are doing in school is valuable, how to communicate with a middle grade child, and how to serve as an advocate for their children, and other children in the school.

- **Schools provide educational opportunities for middle grade parents and families.**

  Many of the parents and family members with whom we spoke expressed a desire to further their own education. Schools routinely provide Adult Basic Education (ABE) and General Educational Development (GED) courses for adults. Most schools conduct these programs after school, on weekends, or during school holidays at times that are convenient for working parents.

Relationships

A recurrent theme throughout our site visits was that personal relationships are the core of the partnerships that are formed in the middle grades. These relationships strengthen the partnerships as schools interact with parents, families and communities.

Schools are an ideal context for developing and fostering strong relationships. Students report that their middle grade teachers and school personnel are interested in them -- both as students, and as growing and maturing young people. Parents are most comfortable in forming partnerships with the school when there has been personal, one-on-one contact with someone from the school (a teacher, parent liaison or others) or with other middle grade parents and family members. Teachers told us that their work is most rewarding when they have time to help students on an individual basis.

As middle grade students become more visible in the community, there are opportunities for those who feel less connected to the school -- older citizens and business owners, for example -- to become supportive of the work of the school. In some communities, property and business owners fear for their safety; when school, family, and community partnerships are nurtured, fears are lessened.

In several of our sites, court-ordered desegregation resulted in school populations that were not representative of the community in which the school was located. Race, culture and ethnicity conflicts were more prevalent in these schools. In these cases, respondents reported that relationships were more difficult to establish and maintain, although none viewed the situation as without promise.

Key approaches:

- **Schools encourage direct contact between middle grade parents, families, and teachers.**

  Communication with parents and families occurred most often through written notices, telephone contact or school/family conferences. Schools often require family/teacher communication at least one time during a semester. Teachers said that they tried to communicate positive messages as well as messages about student misbehavior or academic problems. In Louisville, the Superintendent mandated family/school conferences based on his belief that conferences are a critical tool for keeping families informed, and maintaining strong partnerships between teachers and families.

- **Schools create staffing patterns that support relationships.**

  Across sites we found that additional personnel, whose primary responsibility was family involvement, had greater impact on school/family partnerships than in those sites where building relationships was the sole responsibility of the teacher. For example, Community School District No. 3 in New York City hired two home/school liaisons. These paraprofessionals are well-respected in their communities and provide a direct link to the schools for families who might otherwise not be involved. In other districts and schools we found teachers organized in teams. In these cases each teacher had a reduced number of parents and families to contact. The teaming pattern provided opportunities for teachers to establish and maintain closer relationships with the families.

- **Communities take advantage of middle grade student's relationship with local businesses (as workers and consumers) to build support for middle grade schools.**

  The community members we interviewed felt that middle grade students were a valuable resource to their communities. Local business owners who interacted with middle grade students reported that their attitudes and beliefs about adolescents and schools had improved. In Lamoni, Iowa, for example, students interact with the business community in setting up a "real" business. Using community members as resources students design a product for resale, contact the local bank for a loan to support their business, and sell their product throughout the community.

Shared responsibility and decision making

During the middle grades, relationships change between children and parents and families, between students and teachers, and between young people and their communities. The middle grades are also a time when responsibilities and decision making change, not only for middle grade students, but also for school personnel, parents and families, and the community at large. Home, school, and community are the places where middle grade students learn and are actively involved. Students expressed that they desired independence and wanted more control over the decisions that they make. At the same time, we found that they were not always cognizant of the relationship between their decision making and the attendant consequences of those decisions.

Prior to the middle grades, parents and families have been in control of most of the decisions for their children, including their choice of friends, the school(s) they attend, and often how they dress and act in public. As middle grade students express a desire for more independence and begin to assert themselves, parents feel a loss of control. Finding the "delicate balance," as one parent put it, is sometimes stressful for parents.

Responsibility and decision making in the middle grades are not limited to the personal arena, but extend to the areas of curriculum and instruction as well. What should be taught and how it is taught was viewed by the majority of our respondents as a shared responsibility. Decision making, in the case of curriculum and instruction, involves multiple teachers, additional school personnel such as counselors and service agency personnel, community and business members, parents and families, and the students.

In the middle grade schools we visited, a constant challenge was to coordinate information and efforts around all players to create a whole picture of the student. Each of our respondents, in some way, expressed that they know only a part of each student's life, but few said that they know the "total" child. These partnerships can help to construct a picture of the entire scope of middle grade student needs and inform the decisions made by each participant.

Key approaches

- **Schools include middle grade parents, families, teachers, and students in decisions about curriculum and instruction.**

  Although we found examples of decision making by parents, families, teachers, and students regarding curriculum and instruction, it was most evident in the sites that we visited in the restructuring focus area. Each of the sites that were restructuring their schools, that is changing their organizational pattern toward a middle grade configuration, used multiple sources of input in designing programs, selecting curriculum, and shaping instruction. In all cases these changes were neither easy, nor was the transition a smooth one. However, each site recognized the intrinsic value of gaining the perspective and the participation of everyone who would be affected by changes in the organizational structure, curriculum, and instructional delivery.

- Schools involve middle grade parents, families, and students in conference about coursework and progress.

  Across sites, the use of school/family conferences to disseminate information about coursework and student progress was a common practice. It appears that a trend to involve the student in school/family conferences is emerging. In several sites conferences take the form of a "portfolio night", where students have the main responsibility for showcasing their work and explaining both the strengths and weaknesses of their performance. In other sites, students attend a more traditional conference with their parents and are allowed to provide input and participate in the discussions around progress.

- **Schools coordinate information from the school to ensure smooth communication with middle grade parents and families.**

  Some parents reported that the school "bombarded" them with information about student progress and behavior, programs, activities, and opportunities for involvement. Generally, however, we found that middle grade schools made an effort to coordinate information, especially when the information was coming from teachers. In some cases, one teacher or staff member was responsible for communicating with a family; in other cases, teams of teachers would discuss what information needed to be sent to a family and would rotate the responsibility of contacting the parents or family members.

Leadership

A key factor in the successful schools and programs that we visited was leadership. All of the middle grade principals viewed themselves as instructional leaders within their schools and as leaders in their communities. In large, urban school settings, principals manage large school facilities, direct the total instructional and operational programs of their schools, and supervise a professional and support staff in excess of 75 people. Additionally, they find time to serve on community committees, coordinate efforts to raise funds to support school programs, and develop partnerships with selected area businesses.

We found that leaders in school districts and schools were the primary persons who set the tone for parent, family, and community involvement. In our conversations with them, they were able to articulate their vision for their schools, and expressed deeply held beliefs about partnerships between themselves, their schools, and their constituents. Most school leaders believed that it was their responsibility to provide a context to empower partnerships. Many spoke about their roles as "orchestrator" of partnerships; these leaders felt that they were in a joint relationship and were able to delegate responsibility to others. At the same time, strong leaders also have "their fingers on the pulse" of their school, and parent, family and community concerns.

When we asked teachers, parents, and family members about partnerships, most pointed to the role of a school district or school leader as being critical. Although we found that many people were involved in most of the partnerships we observed, the leader was usually credited with having a primary and essential role in establishing and sustaining the partnerships.

In addition to the leadership in schools and schools districts, we also found that community members, business leaders - who may also be middle grade family members - can also function in leadership roles. Throughout our site visits we found instances where community and business leaders had major responsibilities in school decision making and reform efforts. In two cases community leadership was primarily responsible for restructuring district schools into middle grades configurations. In one instance the involvement of community members led to curriculum reform.

Key approaches:

- **Leaders look for a whole array of community connections.**

  In both middle grade schools and at the district level, leaders were acutely aware of their relations with the community. Leaders often spoke of "public relations", and indicated that their involvement with the community was a factor that contributed positively toward public perception of the school and/or district. School/district leaders are frequently members in multiple civic and business organizations; affiliations with religious groups were a strong community connection, especially in rural areas. The contacts that leaders make through these community, business, and religious organizations are seen as an ongoing support for their schools.

- **Leaders provide a climate of success, including fiscal and human resources.**

  Where parent, family, and community involvement was most successful, we found that the leader had a vision of involvement; the vision was clearly articulated to the staff, to parents, families, and the community; parent, family, and community involvement was planned; and care was taken to provide the necessary resources to accomplish the plan.

- **Communities take an active role in initiating connections and change.**

  Community members across sites reported that they had benefitted from being involved in middle grade reform. However, as well as being beneficiaries, we found that the concern of the larger community for the education and well-being of students can lead to the initiation of reform efforts. For example, in Ft. Worth, TX, although the Superintendent had a plan for involving the community in reform efforts, the community demanded change. Kentucky's statewide reform efforts were the result of community concern about inequities in funding, management, and educational opportunities.

- **Parents and families use community connections to advocate for the school.**

  Parents and family members that we interviewed indicated that they are also involved in civic, business, and religious organizations. Through these organizations parents and families often advocate for middle grade schools. A general feeling among the parents with whom we spoke was that middle grade students and schools need "positive p. r.", as one respondent put it.

Support systems

Active partnerships between middle grade schools and parents, families and communities require a system of support to sustain them. The most frequently mentioned supports were financial resources, human resources, professional development, and the ability and authority to make decisions.

Financial resources. We found a wide range in the amount of fiscal support available for middle grade partnerships. In some cases, financial resources were budgeted as a line item in a school district budget. These resources were usually allocated to parent involvement programs, administered by a director or program coordinator. In other cases, individual school budgets contained resources that were allocated to parent/family involvement activities, and were administered by the principal or a school-level professional whose responsibilities include interaction with parents and families. As a total part of a school district or school budget, the amounts allocated were usually minimal. We believe that financial resources may signal a commitment to middle grade partnerships, more so than an actual necessity to sustain them. However, our respondents made clear the fact that partnerships could not be sustained in the total absence of funding. As one coordinator put it, "You can operate a program on a little money, but you can't operate one without any money."

Human resources. Middle grade teachers are confronted with the demands of large class size and multiple subject areas to teach. Many of them told us that contacting parents for academic and disciplinary reasons was extremely time consuming. These demands force teachers to spend less time on school/family partnership efforts than they would like. Across sites, we found that the most successful partnerships were established and maintained when personnel were assigned to deal specifically with parent and family needs and concerns. Parents told us that they were more likely to have contact with the school when a home/school liaison or coordinator was employed at their child's school. Successful partnerships recognize the increasing demands on teachers, parents, and families and provide additional human response to support their partnerships.

Professional development. Teachers often work in settings that are culturally and racially diverse, and economically different from their own circumstances. Middle grade practitioners emphasized the necessity of professional development activities in an effort to more fully understand their students and parents/families. The successful partnerships we observed provided multiple opportunities for professional development, often allowing parents, families, and community members to interact directly with school personnel on issues of concern. In some cases, parents and families were involved in both planning and delivering professional development activities.

Ability and authority to make decisions. Teachers are the "frontline workers" with parents and families. They make decisions on a daily basis that affect the lives of students and their parents/families. Often, they are the single point of contact with a student's family. Teachers indicated that a necessary support for successful partnerships with families was the ability and authority to make decisions that can connect parents/families with services that are provided by the school and/or the community.

Key approaches:

- **Schools provide professional development for personnel on promising practices and programs for parent, family, and community involvement.**

  Across sites we found that one of the strongest supports for involvement was professional development for school/district staff. Through these programs and activities, teachers and support staff learn about programs, promising practices, and practical strategies that can be used to establish and maintain school/family partnerships.

- **Schools empower frontline workers to make key decisions.**

  In successful programs, frontline workers make decisions that affect students and their parents. More importantly, however, "the system does not get in the way", as one teacher told us. While connections to services for families are more plentiful in large urban settings, access and the ability to obtain these services can be complicated. We found that teachers, when empowered to make decisions and carry them out, were able to navigate the social service system, and connect families with service providers.

- **School create structures and design support systems for frontline workers.**

  Teachers, as frontline workers with students and their families, require support from their colleagues, the school, and the district. We found that schools provide teachers with additional planning time, create flexible scheduling and team teaching opportunities, and provide social and emotional support when needed to empower teachers.

Connections to the curriculum

Sites participating in reform efforts recognize the core role of curriculum and instruction. In the majority of our sites, the strategies to connect middle grade parents and family members generally remains the responsibility of individual teachers. As students enter the middle grades, parents and families lose the single point of contact about what a child is learning that they had in the elementary grades. As we pointed out earlier, connections to the curriculum may be harder to maintain in the middle grades due to the increasing complexity of the curriculum, the difficulty some parents have in dealing with this complexity, and their child's need for more autonomy.

However, the parents we interviewed generally understood that their roles had changed from "helper" to one of "monitor and advocate." Parents found that they could remain connected to what their child was learning by attending school/family conferences, talking directly with the teacher(s), frequently monitoring home learning activities, and providing an atmosphere at home where it was understood that what was happening in school was valued and important. It became less necessary to offer help to their children on specific skills.

Key approaches:

- **Schools engage parents and families in meaningful home learning tasks.**

  A key link to the curriculum is through home learning tasks. As we interviewed parents, family members, students, and teachers we found that the most frequently mention characteristic of a home learning task was "meaningful." When a home learning task was seen as meaningless, students and parents reported lower completion rates, and higher incidence of complaints about home learning activities, in general. Teachers felt that mandated homework policies violated the idea of meaningful home learning tasks, pointing out that "giving homework for the sake of homework is not meaningful at all."

- **Schools demonstrate ways for parents and families to work with middle grade students.**

  Not only do successful school/family partnerships provide families with the materials for conducting home learning tasks, they also demonstrate how materials are to be used at home with students. These demonstrations may involve home learning kits, individual skill development materials, or instructions on how to use a take-home computer.

- **Schools use the content and characteristics of middle school learning experiences as starting points for family connections.**

  We found that the majority of schools in our sites used integrated, thematic, interesting curriculum, and active cooperative learning approaches. These pedagogical tools build on what is known about how middle grade students learn.

- **Parents and families create an environment that values and promotes achievement.**

  Parents frequently expressed doubts about their own skill abilities in relation to the home learning tasks that students were assigned. However, the majority of parents also spoke to us about how "important" it is for their child to succeed and get an education. Many times parents and family members told us that they tried to provide a place for home learning tasks, set aside a "special" time for doing homework, and monitored both learning activities and other, less essential activities (e.g., television viewing) within the home.

Connections to the community

In our sites, successful partnerships were characterized by a strong connection with the community. School leaders and their staff understood that as geographic boundaries broaden at the middle grades (often through a feeder school concept, desegregation order, or schools-of-choice), so did the responsibilities broaden to understand the community. This is especially true in areas where diverse, multiethnic, and multiracial school populations bring unique strengths. In more successful partnerships, the idea of a "melting pot" - where all students assimilate to the standards dictated by the principal's and teacher's culture, race and class - has been replaced by a celebration of the diversity that students, parents and families, and the community bring to the school. We found that all participants in the partnership benefitted when there was a desire and commitment to understand each other. Schools also tended to mirror the unbanicity or rurality of their communities. Economic and social concerns of the community became school concerns and vice versa. The nature of community involvement was tempered by this factor. Where multiple large businesses thrived, community involvement was more "corporate;" where rural agrarian businesses prevailed, community involvement was more familial. In any case, community commitment could be strong, and communities felt that the schools belonged to them. In these cases, they took more responsibility for the school's well being as they defined it.

Key approaches:

- **Schools recognize and acknowledge the unique characteristics of the community; programs build on strengths and needs of the community.**

  Strong programs are built on the accurate assessment of the strengths and needs of a particular community. In our site visits we found that schools conducted needs assessments and periodic formative evaluations of programs in order to make any needed changes. Although all sites were participating in some kind of school reform and shared some common characteristics, each of the communities are unique. The recognition and celebration of the uniqueness and diversity of the communities in which these schools/districts is located sets these successful programs apart. For example, in Beck Middle School, Georgetown, SC, "pocket communities" of various cultural and ethnic diversity are highlighted in the middle grade curriculum, and in activities in which all students participate.

- **Schools take multiple opportunities to engage and invite the community to participate in school activities.**

  We found that strong partnerships between schools and communities were fostered through active participation in school-related activities. Consistently, the more frequently the nine sites took advantage of community resources, the stronger and more positive the response by the community to the school, its programs, and activities.

- **Schools use various strategies to communicate directly with the community.**

  Another cornerstone of school and community partnerships is communication. We found that schools used multiple sources for communicating with the public: through brochures, flyers, newsletters, articles in neighborhood newspapers, and "word of mouth".

However, the most common method of communication was through the local news media - either citywide newspapers or television coverage. While not all of our informants were satisfied with the type of coverage given to schools/districts (for example less positive student behavior being given front page coverage, versus "good news" being relegated to back sections of the paper), none disputed the ability of the news media as a powerful tool for communicating necessary information about schools to the public.

Conclusion

School districts and schools are learning lessons daily that can help to inform others involved in the reform process. From the beginning, we believed that the sites we chose would contribute to these lessons. We believed that the stories from these sites would provide rich descriptions of the role of school, family, and community partnerships in education reform. Our beliefs were confirmed as we talked with those on the "front lines" of middle grade reform.

The eight themes presented here are simple and obvious, yet they are highly complex. The approaches of school districts and middle grade schools to these themes involved new ways of thinking about middle grade students, their parents and families, and the communities in which they live, work and interact. As such, they teach us all.

ASSESSMENT OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE REFORMS

Introduction

Each of the sites chosen for the study represents existing and promising practices and programs within one of three research focus areas: comprehensive districtwide programs, school restructuring, and adult-child learning programs (home learning). Within each research focus area we found sites located in diverse contexts, a wide range of program designs, and varying degrees of program implementation. While no two programs were exactly the same, data collection strategies allowed us to examine the impact of reform efforts across all sites. For example, researchers gathered any available written program evaluation materials from schools/districts; interview protocols contained questions for parents and family members, students, teachers, school administrators, and community members about program effectiveness, attitudes toward the program and school, the degree of program institutionalization, and perceived and unanticipated outcomes of the program.

In the initial review of literature (Rutherford, et al., 1993) we identified five categories of reform outcomes: students, parents and families, teachers, schools, and communities. Additionally, we were interested in the institutionalization of parent, family, and community involvement reform efforts as evidenced by the degree to which schools/districts believe them to be useful and continue their implementation.

Limitations. One recommendation for future research that we made in the Summary Literature Review (see pp. 1-35) was that short and long-term potential outcomes of middle grade school/family partnerships on students, teachers, schools, school districts and communities be investigated. Two implications can be drawn from this recommendation. First, examining the potential outcomes implies comparisons between partnerships and other conditions; for example, similar schools, families, and communities without partnerships. Second, exploring outcomes over time, or longitudinally, is also implied.

Our research design (qualitative; ethnographic/descriptive) and methodology (semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, follow-up telephone interviews, and document review) allowed for neither comparisons between partnerships under controlled conditions, nor a longitudinal study of us sites or participants in those sites. Our study was conducted over a six-month period with two visits to each of the selected sites. In short, we did not follow programs over time; neither did we follow students exposed to those programs over time.

The outcomes that we have reported in the Case Study Summaries in this volume (pp. 45-74), and in Volume II of this Final Technical Report (Case Studies), are almost entirely based on the perception of participants, rather than hard evidence, e.g., norm- or criterion-referenced tests. The reported outcomes have not been verified independently. While perceptions are important, they may be colored by enthusiasm and vested interest, and may not reflect actual conditions as they exist.

Outcomes that we report here, e.g., changes in attitudes and behaviors, depend on a few informants rather than a representative sample of teachers, parents, and others in these sites. However, key informants we interviewed described changes in organization and school procedures which were then verified by documents collected at the site, and/or the reports of other participants.

Outcomes for Students

Student Achievement. The relationship between student achievement and parent, family, and community involvement revealed in the literature (see, for example, Henderson and Berla, 1994) is **associative**, that is, there is a positive relationship between active involvement and student achievement. Across the sites that we visited, key players in middle grade reform efforts expressed the belief that there was a strong relationship between student achievement and family and community involvement; however, we did not find that schools/districts had conducted . research locally to support this belief. Key program personnel we interviewed indicated that they knew that evaluation, and especially examining the link to student achievement, was a needed program component.

In materials gathered from schools/districts, increased student achievement was often an implicit or explicitly stated outcome of parent, family and community involvement. While research evidence supports positive effects of family and community involvement on achievement (Henderson and Berla, 1994), materials we gathered rarely cite research evidence, and appear to rely more on intuitive knowledge of these effects than actual data from research.

Relationships and attitudes. Students whose parents or family members were involved in school activities reported positive attitudes about school, teachers, and homework. In interviews with students, we learned that they enjoyed school, that their teachers were more interested in them because their parents frequently communicated with the teacher, and that homework was less difficult.

Although some students told us that "there are times when I don't get along with my family," generally students expressed positive attitudes about relationships with their parents or family members. Most students felt that the involvement of parents and family members was a positive benefit to them; students said that they knew that their parents and family were interested in their education and success in school.

Students involved in programs that were linked to the community felt that they had gained a new perspective on what it means to "be in the real world of work." The relationships that they had established with community members in the workplace often continued beyond the duration of the internship. It appeared that these program opportunities created new roles for students within the community, both as learners and as workers.

Outcomes for Parents

Increased skills/knowledge. Many of the parents and family members with whom we spoke indicated that they had increased their own skills and knowledge. Adult Basic Education and General Educational Development courses, they felt, not only strengthened and improved their own skills but also gave them the ability to help their children at home.

Learning to deal with multiple teachers and different organizational patterns in the middle grades presents challenges for parents and families. Involved parents and family members reported that they "had learned a lot about how schools operate." Typical of many of the responses, one parent told us, "If you want to help your child, you've got to learn the system."

Parents and family members involved in programs offered by the school, e.g. advocacy and empowerment programs, indicated that they had learned skills that could help them advocate for their own children and other children in the school. One interesting unexpected outcome of advocacy and empowerment training, as reported by parents and family members, was that after the training they were viewed "as threats" by school personnel.

Relationships and Attitudes. Parents reported generally positive attitudes about schools and teachers. They said that building relationships with the school and teachers resulted in an "open atmosphere, where we can talk about problems when they do happen."

Connections with the school and curriculum. Parents and family members whom we interviewed felt that they were more closely connected with the school because of their involvement. Increased communication between teachers and families was most often cited as the reason for this closer connection. Communication most often took the form of personal messages from the teacher, or face-to-face communication in school/family conferences. Less often, teachers or school personnel who were directly responsible for parent/family involvement would make home visits to talk with family members about student progress.

Connections with the curriculum were established in each of the adult-child learning programs that we visited. Parents and family members indicated that they understood more of what their children were learning in school, and felt more confident about providing support for their children when they knew what was being learned in the classroom. In restructuring sites, connections to the curriculum were established when parents and family members were involved in decisions about what would be taught in the middle grades. These families indicated that they felt a greater sense of responsibility for what their child was learning when they were involved in these decisions.

New roles. Schools and parents and family members themselves created new roles in the partnerships we observed. Parents indicated that when their children were in the elementary grades, they often served as volunteers in classrooms helping as room mothers or with housekeeping chores. As their children moved to the middle grades, the nature of their involvement changed. They were no longer needed in those same roles. Because they wanted to remain involved, they searched for new roles. One new role that emerged was that of advocate. Schools provided programs on parent empowerment and advocacy, and parents indicated that they had become advocates for all children in the school. In several of the sites we visited parents and family members were used as resources in classroom and the school. The expertise of parents and family members was drawn on to supplement instruction, and provide additional human resources in working with middle grade students. Parents and family members reported that they "felt useful" and enjoyed interacting with both school personnel and middle grade students.

In addition to assuming the role of advocate, parents and families also share in the decision making process. Many of the parents and family members we interviewed serve on school decision making teams. In school restructuring sites, we observed parents and family members actively engaged in decision making about the organizational structure and operation of the school, and in one case, the establishment of a middle grade school.

One of the new roles for parents and families that we observed was as a trainer of other parents and school staff. In one site where there is a strong and active parent organization districtwide, parents train other parents and family members in organizational skills, parenting, and advocacy. Parents and family members have even served as trainers of teachers in statewide reform efforts and the effects of these reform efforts on districtwide programs.

Outcomes for Teachers

Connections with families. Teachers reported that when parents and families were involved with the school, strong connections were made between themselves and the families of the students they taught. Most often the teachers we interviewed talked in terms of student academic success and the fact that active involvement by parents and family members usually resulted in increased student achievement and fewer discipline problems.

Many of the teachers told us that family context was an important variable in dealing with parents and family members. As relationships were built with families, over time, teachers gained a greater respect and understanding of "where the family is coming from." Understanding family context made it easier to connect with families, and ultimately, students. We found that teachers employed numerous strategies in order to communicate with families. Teachers believed that once they had established regular, frequent communication with a family, developing strong partnerships was possible.

New roles. In addition to regular instructional duties, teachers told us that they had become facilitators with families. Where integrated services are located in the school, these teachers are empowered to make decisions that affect the families of the students they teach. Teachers often link families with social services and other agencies that provide basic family needs. The teachers we interviewed felt that this new role was "not just another add-on" to their teaching responsibilities, but a vital part of establishing partnerships with families.

Outcomes for Schools

Increased Parent, Family and Community Involvement. In all of the sites that we visited, key personnel stated that an intended program goals was an increase in the number of parents, families and community members that were involved in school/family partnerships. Program records we inspected indicated that increases in involvement did occur, especially where schools and districts used multiple strategies to reach parents.

Support for reform efforts. An increase in the number of family and community members involved in reform efforts usually resulted in additional support for school/family partnerships. These supports took the form of additional human resources available to assist with the school instructional program, and as agreement and collaboration with planned reforms. School personnel reported that linkage with community members and businesses provided on-going support for reform efforts. In one case, however, the school became a political arena for differences in educational goals, philosophies, organization, and strategies to accomplish reforms.

Outcomes for Communities

Connections with Schools. Community members and businesses told us that their relationships with middle grade schools and students had changed significantly because of their involvement in reform efforts. In the sites we visited, we observed that community connections with the school had moved beyond the traditional Adopt-a-School model, although some programs still carry that title. Interviews with community members and businesses revealed that while financial support for program efforts was still a component of their relationship with the school, they now viewed their involvement as an additional resource to help schools achieve their mission and goals related to reform. The involvement of community members and businesses often took the form of serving as resources in classrooms, as "experts" in their field; we also observed community and businesses involved in the decision making process at the local campus level.

Leadership: a new role for communities. The idea that the school belongs to the community is not new; however, many of the school personnel and community and business members we interviewed told us that "schools have tended [in the past] to operate in isolation from the community." As connections between schools and communities have been fostered, we observed that community and business members now assume leadership roles within the framework of reform efforts. In several of our sites where organizational and curriculum changes were an integral part of reform, we observed community members and the business community taking an active part in leadership of the reform efforts; in at least two of our sites, leadership from the community was responsible for the initiation of middle grade reform.

Institutionalization of Programs

How useful are school/family partnerships from the perspective of those involved in reform? Is there evidence that schools/districts support these partnerships through policy frameworks and by providing fiscal and human resources? These two questions frame the discussion of program institutionalization. In over 80 interviews with school personnel, parents and family members, and community and business members, school/family partnerships were viewed as critically important to the success of reform efforts.

In each site, finding appropriate strategies and activities to involve parents, families, and the community was most often a matter of trial and error. Unsuccessful strategies and activities were discarded; successful strategies and activities became an integral part of the reform effort. Informants indicated that alignment with the needs of families and communities and program goals was primarily responsible for the long term implementation of school/family partnership strategies and activities.

Support for school/family partnerships as a part of school reform is evidenced by the priority that leaders within each site placed on these partnerships. In the sites we visited we noted that state, local (district), and/or school policies regarding parent and family involvement were in place. Although it was noted that these policies did not guarantee that school/family partnerships were a priority, they provided a framework for program requirements and often specified program operations.

Human and fiscal resource allocations for school/family partnerships are frequently linked to budgetary priorities within a school or district. It appears that where school/family partnerships are viewed as important, where program leadership advocates for these partnerships, and where there is historical precedence for school/family partnership efforts, schools and districts are more likely to support them by providing and/or continuing human and fiscal resources.

Conclusion

As parents and families, teachers, schools, and communities participate in partnerships we found evidence of positive outcomes for the stakeholders in reform efforts. The most compelling outcome of these partnerships is the link to student achievement. From our research it is also the least documented outcome, often relying on an intuitive, deeply held belief that the involvement of parents, families, and the community improves student achievement and success. Changed attitudes, new roles, stronger connections with curriculum, and linkages to schools and the community are results of school/family partnerships.

Documenting the outcomes of school/family partnerships is critical for their success. Future research may document other outcomes; the outcomes found in these nine sites may be helpful as school/family partnerships are planned and implemented in other contexts.

ASSESSMENT OF THE RESOURCES REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT THE REFORMS

"You can run a program on a little money; but, you can't run a program on no money at all." -Program Coordinator

Introduction

To assess the fiscal resources required to design, implement, and sustain school/family partnerships RMC Research developed a Program Resources Questionnaire that was distributed during the first site visit to each school/district contact person. The questions focused both on funding and in-kind resources that were directed toward parent, family, and community involvement. We did not require program personnel to conduct special budget analyses to obtain resources allocation figures. Additionally, we sought to determine the human resource allocations in each of the sites we visited. Our Indepth Interview Protocol for Key Contacts contained questions about the number and duties of program personnel allocated to the school/family partnership initiatives.

First we present the results from the Program Resources Questionnaire for fiscal resources, by research focus area (comprehensive districtwide programs, school restructuring, adult-child learning activities). Then we present results from interviews conducted with key contacts concerning human resources. The results are presented in narrative form and contain a discussion of our findings, where appropriate.

Fiscal Resources

The return rate on the Program Resources Questionnaire was thirty percent (three sites out of nine). Although we told respondents that budget estimates were acceptable, there are two possible explanations for the poor return rate. First, the site personnel we identified for completing the questionnaire may not have had access to district or school budgets. In short we may have asked the wrong person to complete the form. Second, where specific budgets did exist, personnel may have considered those data (even though they could be an estimate) to be restricted, or sensitive information. Follow-up telephone calls made to sites did not yield a higher return rate.

Comprehensive Districtwide Programs. The three sites chosen for study in the comprehensive districtwide research focus area are all large, urban districts. Two of the districts, Fort Worth, TX, and Louisville, KY, have initiatives at the district level and the local school level that deal with middle grade school/family partnerships. However, these initiatives are not budgeted at the district level. In fact both districts do not define their initiatives as "programs." It was evident that in both of these districts it was difficult for personnel to partition out the costs of the initiatives from the total district budget.

Because of the scope of involvement initiatives, it was clear that many of the fiscal resources are provided in-kind. Often school business partners contribute equipment, materials and supplies and support to middle grade schools. For example, in Louisville, Barret Traditional Middle School receives considerable support from Baptist East Hospital. State-of-the art technology is provided for student use, and personnel are often on campus as resources to the instructional program. In Fort Worth, J. C. Penney serves as a training site for middle grade students in the Vital Link program. As part of the C^3 (Communities, Corporations, and Classrooms) program, dozens of businesses are linked to school reform efforts.

In contrast, Minneapolis Public Schools provides a district-level budget for the Volunteer Services/Family Partnership program. The total budget for the 1993-94 school year was almost $240,000. All of these funds are provided from state and local school district allocations. Additionally, local service organizations and foundations contribute scholarship monies for individual school campuses. Approximately 60% of the total funds are allocated to personnel salaries and benefits. The remainder of the funds is spent on operating expenses (materials and supplies) for the program.

In all three comprehensive districtwide program sites, local school principals indicated that they spent discretionary funds on school/family partnership initiatives. Operating parent centers within their schools, refreshments for meetings, providing transportation costs for parents to attend meetings, and costs for basic family needs (clothing and food) were part of the discretionary spending of these principals. Local schools also receive the benefit of monies derived from parent-teacher-student organizations. In one middle school we visited, the Parent Teacher Organization raised over $45,000 through various sales and community-based events during the year. These additional funds are usually earmarked specifically for school/family partnership initiatives at the local school, or to supplement current infrastructures that benefit parents (for example, a school telephone "hotline" for parents, or parent center activities).

School restructuring. In the restructuring sites that we visited, none of the schools or districts returned our questionnaire. In both Lamoni, IA, and Shelburne, VT, school restructuring efforts were aimed at the entire organizational pattern of the school. In other words, restructuring took the form of moving toward a middle school concept, reorganizing into grade level communities, or new school construction. Lacking specific information from these schools/districts, it was impossible to estimate the costs associated with these kinds of school restructuring efforts that involve both parents, families, and community members.

At Beck Middle School in Georgetown, SC, Project REACH is partially funded from foundation sources. Initial start-up funds were provided, but the school was required to supplement these funds in order to keep the program viable. No cost estimates were available from program personnel on initial REACH funding.

Adult-child learning programs. Two of the sites in this research focus area were able to provide us with some estimates of program costs. In New York City, funds for parent and family involvement initiatives have totalled over $8 million citywide since the inception of the Parent Involvement Program office in 1988. However, specific breakdowns for budget expenditures were not available. In Natchez, MS, the Chapter 1 Parent Center is funded through local federal Chapter 1 monies. The total budget for the Center is over $100 thousand per year. Of that amount, 75% is spent on salaries and benefits, and 25% is spent on materials and supplies for working with students and families. In Rochester, NY, the Parent/Child Learning Program is one of several initiatives provided at the district level. The district was unable to provide us with specific budget information about the program due to the nature of their funding source.

Although we were able to find adult-child learning "programs," many of the activities and strategies that link parents directly to what their students are learning through homework are located in individual classrooms. In the absence of a cohesive program that links home learning activities across individual classrooms, it is impossible to estimate the amount of funds that are spent on adult-child learning activities.

Hidden costs. Teachers and school administrators that we interviewed indicated that they spent their own personal funds - estimated by most teachers to be in excess of $1,000 per year -

on such items as food, clothing, leisure reading materials, and other instructional materials for individual students (aside from whole-classroom use). If these estimates are accurate, it is possible that teacher-supported school reform efforts reach into the millions of dollars nationwide.

Human Resources

In all of the sites we visited, respondents told us that human resources were valued above any other resource for the successful implementation of school/family partnership initiatives. In some cases local school leadership provided the vision for parent, family, and community involvement. In other cases, district leadership was responsible for successful partnerships. We visited in schools where groups composed of teachers, parents, family members, and community members were empowered to make educational reform happen. In other sites we saw personnel who were employed by the school district to work with school/family partnerships. Perhaps because partnerships are strongest when they are developed and nurtured at a personal level, we observed that these promising and effective programs relied heavily on human resources to make school/family partnerships work. Employing personnel to deal solely with parents and families was viewed as a positive strategy by both school personnel and the parents and family members that we interviewed. Most informants said that personal communication and trust-building between schools and families was facilitated when there was a staff member dedicated to working with parents and families.

In the comprehensive districtwide sites that we visited, only one (Minneapolis, MN) had personnel at the district level who were employed to administer the program. In Fort Worth, TX, and Louisville, KY, district level staff - for example Middle School Directors - were responsible for overseeing all middle schools in the district, including efforts at involving parents, families, and community members in the schools. Both of these districts also employ a person who serves as the liaison with the business community. In Louisville, a district-level resource teacher oversees the implementation of the Effective Parenting Information for Children program.

School restructuring sites did not employ individuals at the district or school level who were responsible for school/family partnerships. In all of these sites, our respondents indicated that the size of the community and the schools played a significant role in involvement. The idea expressed most often was that "everyone is responsible for changing the school; it's not the responsibility of any one individual."

Two of the adult-child learning programs that we visited are "nested" within larger, more comprehensive districtwide involvement efforts. In New York City, Community School District No. 3 employs a director for the Parent Involvement Program, a coordinator for the adult-child learning program, three school neighborhood workers who share responsibilities for the middle schools in the district, and two parent liaisons in each school. In Rochester, NY, there is a district level coordinator to oversee school/family partnership initiatives, including the Parent/Child Learning Program. In Natchez, MS, the Chapter 1 Parent Center is part of the federal programs office. The Center has a coordinator, two full-time resource teachers, and paraprofessionals who work directly with parents, family members, and students.

Conclusion

While fiscal resources are necessary to operate school/family partnership initiatives, does the quality of the program depend on the amount of money dedicated to those initiatives? Our research did not indicate that "more was better." Some programs began small; over the course of time these programs were scaled-up by committing additional resources to them. Some initiatives had no ostensible fiscal support; yet, the needs of families and communities were being met. The common denominator in each of the programs we visited was human resources. Without the vision and dedication of one or two individuals, these initiatives would have been less successful. It may be that investment in human resources has the greatest return for establishing and maintaining effective school/family partnerships.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Introduction

Studies of Education Reform: Parent and Community Involvement in Education focused on school/family and community partnerships in nine sites throughout the United States. These nine sites employed different strategies to successfully involve parents, family members, businesses, and their communities in education reform. In some cases, partnerships were developed in order to further reform initiatives; in other cases, school/family and community partnerships were the result of reform efforts. The lessons we learned in each site, and the themes that we found across all sites, can inform both policymakers and practitioners about effective and promising practices of school/family partnerships in the middle grades.

Implications for Policy

From our research several implications for policy concerning school/family partnerships in the middle grades are evident:

- **Student success - the ultimate goal of educational reform efforts - should be an integral theme of policy.**

  While structures of parent involvement programs, adequate resources, and communication among stakeholders are all vitally important, policymakers must keep in mind that the intended goal of education reform is success for all children. As such, policies should be directed at linking families with resources in the school and the community that foster student success.

- **Policies, at all levels, must support school/family and community partnerships.**

  Federal, state, and local education agencies can empower school/family and community partnerships through clear definitions, regulations, guidance, and communication; support for activities at the school level; provision of information and resources; and dissemination of existing and promising practices in the field of middle grade school/family and community partnerships. Formulating policies, establishing information networks (both human and technological), and supporting innovation are some of the conditions that can facilitate the formation of partnerships.

- **Policies should be written with an understanding of the contexts in which they are to be implemented to allow for flexibility at the local level.**

  Policies are ultimately implemented in local sites. While federal, state, and district policies must be written for a wide variety of contexts in which middle grade partnerships are implemented, policy language should remain flexible enough to accommodate diversity among students, families, and communities. In short, policies should not create additional barriers to establishing and maintaining school/family partnerships.

- **Increased funding, while helpful, is not the key to success.**

  Education reform initiatives that include school/family and community partnerships as an integral part of the reform, or as an intended outcome of the reform, need financial support to operate. Funds alone, however, are not a panacea. Instead, local sites need strategic planning, professional development, commitment, outreach, and other non-financial resources, e.g., time, to be successful. A key role for policy is the provision of both financial and non-financial resources.

Implications for Practice

As we talked with practitioners, parents, family members, and community members; and as we observed district-level and local site activities, we were fortunate to see school/family and community partnerships in action. From our conversations and observations, we drew the following implications for practice:

- **Find multiple ways for middle grade parents, families, and the community to be involved in school reform efforts.**

  Recognize the diversity of parents, families, community, and business members as valued resources who have many strengths. Find ways to empower these stakeholders as key players in education reform. "One size does not fit all" when it comes to establishing and maintaining school/family and community partnerships. Institute a variety of practices and programs at the district, school, and home levels to address varying strengths and needs.

- **Establish support systems to overcome the challenges faced in sustaining effective middle grade school/family and community partnerships.**

  Parents, families, and school personnel alike must sometimes overcome a large array of internal and external challenges to transform their relationships with each other. As these key players explore together ways to overcome these challenges, non-threatening avenues of communication must be open to them. As middle grade students grow and develop into young adults, schools can help parents and families remain connected, both to the school and to their students, through collaboration and partnership.

  Preservice and inservice training for practitioners can promote parents' roles in comprehensive reform, school restructuring, and adult-child learning. Having practitioners learn by doing; being responsible for collaborating with parents, families, and community and business members; and reflecting on effective strategies in group and professional development settings as a regular part of their ongoing careers can be a powerful strategy to build capacity and overcome challenges.

- **Frequent and thoughtful communication counts.**

  Establishing and maintaining middle grade school/family and community partnerships is a social, political, and educational activity involving multiple parties with diverse perspectives. Communicating frequently and planfully can help to foster strong relationships.

- **Allow students to be active co-constructors in home learning activities with their parents and families.**

  Adolescents struggle with issues of independence and control, but need the guidance and support from their parents and families. Foster positive conditions where the students themselves play a greater role in designing activities that involve their parents and families.

- **Disseminate information about middle grade school/family partnerships directly to end-users.**

  Middle grade parents, families, communities, businesses, and practitioners need information about school/family and community partnerships. Use a wide variety of ways to make information about these partnerships (for example, studies that focus on innovative, exemplary practices and programs) available to stakeholders involved in education reform.

- **Plan to evaluate the impact of your efforts early and often.**

  Using both formative and summative evaluation information can lead to continuous improvement in the implementation of reform initiatives, and ultimately to greater student success.

Conclusion

School/family and community partnerships in the middle grades share many things in common with partnerships at other grade levels. However, there are unique characteristics that shape the implications for policy and practice on partnerships in the middle grades. Knowledge of adolescent growth and development; the changing roles of key players in a student's life; philosophies of middle grades education; and supports necessary to overcome the challenges peculiar to middle grade parent, family, and community involvement must be considered in developing and maintaining middle grade partnerships. These unique characteristics imply that both policymakers and practitioners must think and act in different ways than they have done in the past.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Introduction

In our original review of the current state-of-the art, and in the Summary Review of the Literature (see pp. 1-35 of this volume), we presented four recommendations for future research. First, we recommended that future research focus on middle grades education, based on specific roles as schools, families, and communities join together to benefit students. Second, we recommended that both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the context and processes of developing, planning, and implementing middle grade school/family partnerships and family involvement programs be conducted. Third, a recommendation that research on the challenges to forming middle grade school/family partnerships, and the strategies used to meet those challenges was made. The fourth recommendation was that short and long-term potential outcomes of middle grade school/family partnerships on students, teachers, schools, school districts and communities be investigated.

While this study represents a good beginning, it is our hope that it is only a springboard for further dialog and research about middle grade school/family and community partnerships. We have learned about the contexts; planning, design, and implementation; challenges; supports; and outcomes of middle grade school/family and community partnerships in nine sites that represent promising practices and programs. The research from these sites answered many of our initial questions; many questions remain unanswered.

Limitations of the Research. There are two implications can be drawn from the fourth recommendation for future research that we noted previously. First, examining the potential outcomes implies comparisons between partnerships and other conditions; for example, similar schools, families, and communities without partnerships. Second, exploring outcomes over time, or longitudinally, is also implied.

Our research design (qualitative; ethnographic/descriptive) and methodology (semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, follow-up telephone interviews, and document review) allowed for neither comparisons between partnerships under controlled conditions, nor a longitudinal study of us sites or participants in those sites. Our study was conducted over a six-month period with two visits to each of the selected sites. In short, we did not follow programs over time; neither did we follow students exposed to those programs over time.

The outcomes that we have reported in the Case Study Summaries in this volume (pp. 45-74), and in Volume II of this Final Technical Report (Case Studies), are almost entirely based on the perception of participants, rather than hard evidence, e.g., norm- or criterion-referenced tests. The reported outcomes have not been verified independently. While perceptions are important, they may be colored by enthusiasm and vested interest, and may not reflect actual conditions as they exist.

Outcomes that we report here, e.g., changes in attitudes and behaviors, depend on a few informants rather than a representative sample of teachers, parents, and others in these sites. However, key informants we interviewed described changes in organization and school procedures which were then verified by documents collected at the site, and/or the reports of other participants. In the future, studies related to parent, family, and community involvement should incorporate designs that provide for carefully controlled comparisons over longer periods of time, with representative samples of respondents.

Implications

Our conceptual frameworks for each of the three research focus areas (comprehensive districtwide programs, school restructuring, and adult-child learning programs) provide a useful organizational schema for our implications. Implications, in the form of research questions, are presented below for context; program planning, design, and implementation; challenges; supports; and outcomes.

Context

- Are the findings of this study replicable in other varied contexts?
  Middle grade settings, organizational patterns, and instructional delivery systems vary. The findings from this study should be tested in these environments.
- What gender, age, family structure, multicultural, and multiethnic differences exist in middle grade school/family and community partnerships?
  Differences in participation by fathers; older parents, family members, or siblings; single or blended families; and the role of race and ethnicity should be explored further.
- Are the specific differences between rural and urban school/family partnerships meaningful?

Program Planning, Design, and Implementation

- What planning and design processes are most effective?

  Investigations and planned comparisons of the planning and design processes of middle grade school/family and community partnerships may yield important findings for developing and sustaining other partnerships.
- Do the planning, design, and implementation processes for middle grade school/family and community partnerships have implications for high schools? Can the same processes be used in secondary schools to develop school/family and community partnerships?
- Does information from research improve the quality of planning, design, and implementation of middle grade school family partnerships?

Challenges

- What other innovative practices have schools, families, and communities used to overcome the challenges associated with developing and sustaining partnerships?
- Do the challenges of middle grade school/family and community partnerships apply to other levels and types of education reform?

Supports

- What roles can federal, state, and local policymakers play in supporting the active involvement of middle grade parents, families, and communities?
- Do specific types of preservice and inservice professional development have different levels of success in school/family and community partnerships?
- What costs associated with middle grade school/family partnerships produce the greatest benefits? Is there a point of diminishing returns?

Outcomes

- How can practitioners and researchers design more exacting and rigorous studies that examine the link between middle grade school/family partnerships and student achievement?
- What benefits to the various participants are likely from conceptualizing school/family and community partnerships in different ways?

Conclusion

Our current research has provided a snapshot of middle grade school/family and community partnerships. Like a still photograph, it has captured dynamic individuals, processes, strategies, and activities and frozen them in one-dimensional images that reflect only the surface of who and what they are. Research has the capability to help the stakeholders in middle grade partnerships continually grow and change; to help educators, parents and families, students, and communities and businesses engage in self-study and reflection on their partnerships; and provide rich qualitative and quantitative data to improve education reform efforts.

APPENDIX A

References

APPENDIX A

References

Ahlenius, M. (1983). *Colorado families and schools project: A study of school policy and its impact on families.* Final report. Denver, CO: Colorado Congress of Parents, Teachers, and Students.

American Association of School Administrators. (1990). *Leadership News, 61*, 3.

American Indian Science and Engineering Society. (1989). *Our voices, our vision: American Indians speak out for educational excellence.* Boulder, CO: Author.

Armor, D., Conny-Osegura, P., Cox, M., King, N., McDonnell, L., Pascal, A., Pauly, E., & Zellman, G. (1976). *Analysis of the school preferred reading program in selected Los Angeles minority schools*. Santa Monica, CA: The Rand Corporation. ED 130-243.

Ascher, C. (1987). *Improving the home-school connection for poor and minority urban students.* ERIC/CUE Trends and Issues, 8. New York: Columbia University Teachers College. ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education. (EJ No. 381 241)

Baker, D.P. & Stevenson, D.L. (1986). Mothers' strategies for children's school achievement: Managing the transition to high school. *Sociology of Education, 59,* 156-166.

Barber, G.M. (1987). *Increasing parental involvement in helping fourth grade children to learn through home curriculum to improve homework habits.* (Practicum Report). Miami, FL: Nova University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 291 520)

Becker, H.J. & Epstein, J.L. (1981). *Parent involvement: Teacher practices and judgments.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Social Organization of Schools.

Becker, H.J. & Epstein, J.L. (1982a). Parent involvement: A study of teacher practices. *Elementary School Journal, 83,* 85-102.

Becker, H.J. and Epstein, J.L. (1982b). *Influence on teachers' use of parent involvement at home.* (Report No. 324). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Social Organization of Schools.

Berla, N. (1991). Parent involvement at the middle school level. *The ERIC Review.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Berla, N., Henderson, A.T., & Kerewsky, W. (1989). *The middle school years: A parents' handbook*. Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Birman, B.F., Orland, M.E., Jung, R.K., Anson, R., Garcia, G.N., Moore, M.T., Funkhouser, J.E., Morrison, D.R., Turnbull, B.J., & Reisner, E. (1987). *The current operation of the Chapter 1 program: Final report from the National Assessment of Chapter 1.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Bliss, B. (1986). Literacy and the limited English population: A national perspective. In C. Simich-Dudgeon (Ed.), *Issues of Parent Involvement and Literacy.* Proceedings of symposium held at Trinity College, Washington, DC.

Bowman, P. & Howard, C. (1985). Race-related socialization, motivation, and academic achievement: A study of black youth in three generation families. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry, 24*(2), 134-141.

Brandt, R. (1986). On improving achievement of minority children: A conversation with James Comer. *Educational Leadership, 43*(5), 13-17.

Brantlinger, E. (1985a). Low income parents' opinions about the social class composition of schools. *American Journal of Education, 93,* 389-408.

Brantlinger, E. (1985b). Low income parents' perceptions of favoritism in the schools. *Urban Education, 20*(1), 82-102.

Brice-Heath, S. (1983). *Way with words.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, P.C. (1989). Involving parents in the education of their children. *ERIC Digest.* Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.

Cazden, C.B. (1986). Classroom discourse. In M.C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching,* third edition. New York: MacMillan.

Center for Evaluation, Development, and Research. (1990). *Parent involvement in the schools.* Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa

Chapman, W.K. (1991). Can a state school/home/community initiative make a difference: The Illinois Urban Partnership for at-risk students. *Phi Delta Kappan, 72,* 355-358.

Chavkin, N.F. and Williams D.L., Jr. (1987). Enhancing parent involvement: Guidelines for access to an important resource for school administrators. *Education and Urban Society, 19,* 164-184. (EJ 351 805)

Chrispeels, J.A. (1987a). *Home-school partnership planner.* San Diego, CA: San Diego County Office of Education.

Chrispeels, J.A. (1987b). The family as an educational resource. *Community Education Journal,* April, 10-17.

Chrispeels, J., Bourta, M., & Daugherty, M. (1988). *Communicating with parents.* San Diego, CA: San Diego Public Schools.

Chrispeels, J. (1991a). *School building practices that foster home learning*. Presenter's Guide. San Diego Public Schools.

Chrispeels, J. (1991b). District leadership in parent involvement: Policies and actions in San Diego. *Phi Delta Kappan, 72,* 367-371.

Chrispeels, J. (1993). *School Restructuring to Facilitate Parent and Community Involvement in the Middle Grades*. United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Contract No. RR-91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Chubb, J.E. (1988). Why the current wave of school reform will fail. *The Public Interest, 90,* 28-49.

Clark, R. (1983). *Family life and school achievement: Why poor black children succeed and fail.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Clark, R.M. (1989). *The role of parents in ensuring education success in school restructuring efforts*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

Clarke-Stewart, K.A. (1983). Exploring the assumptions of parent education. In R. Haskin & D. Adams (Eds.), *Parent education and public policy,* (pp. 257-276). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Cochran, M. (1987). The parental empowerment process: building on family strengths. *Equity and Choice*, 4, (*1*), 9-24.

Cochran, M. & Henderson, C.R. (1986). *Family matters: Evaluation of the parental empowerment program*. Final report summary. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.

Cohen, D. (1990). Parents as partners: Helping families build a foundation for learning. *Education Week,* May, 13-20.

Cole, M. & Griffin, P. (1987). *Contextual factors in education: Improving science and mathematics education for women.* Madison, WI: Wisconsin Center for Educational Research.

Comer, J.P. (1984). Home-school relationships as they affect the academic success of children. *Education and Urban Society, 71,* 323-337.

Comer, J.P. (1986). Parent participation in the schools. *Phi Delta Kappan, 67,* 442-446.

Comer, J.P. (1988a). Educating poor minority children. *Scientific American, 259*(5), 42-48.

Comer, J.P. (1988b). Is parenting essential to good teaching? *National Education Association Today, 6*(6), 34-40.

Committee for Economic Development. (1987). *Children in need: Investment strategies for the educationally disadvantaged*. Washington, DC: Author

Council of Chief State School Officers. (1991). *Families in school: State strategies and policies to improve family involvement in education.* Washington, DC: Author.

Crump, S.J. & Ellis, K.J. (1995). *The School and Home in Bayview Community*. Paper presented at the Seventh Annual International Roundtable on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning. San Francisco, CA.

D'Angelo, D. & Adler, C. (1991). Chapter 1: A catalyst for improving parent involvement. *Phi Delta Kappan, 72,* 350-354.

Dauber, S.L. & Epstein, J.L. (1991). Parent attitudes and practices of involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. In N. Chavkin (Ed.), *Minority parent involvement in education.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Davies, D. (1985). *Parent involvement in the public schools in the 1980s: Proposals, issues, opportunities.* Paper presented at the Research for Better Schools Conference, Philadelphia, PA.

Davies, D. (1987). Parent involvement in the public schools: Opportunities for administrators. *Education and Urban Society, 19,* 147-163.

Davies, D. (1988). *Hard to reach parents in three countries: Perspectives on how schools relate to low-status families.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

Davies, D. (1991). Schools reaching out: Family, school and community partnerships for students' success. *Phi Delta Kappan, 72,* 376-382.

de Kanter, A., Ginsburg, A.L. and Milne, A.M. (1986). *Parent involvement strategies: A new emphasis on traditional parent roles.* Paper presented at the Conference on Effects of Alternative Designs in Compensatory Education, Washington, DC. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 293 919)

Earle, J. (1990). *The steps to restructuring: Changing Seattle's middle schools.* Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education.

Eastman, G. (1988). *Family involvement in education.* Madison, WI: Department of Public Instruction.

Eccles, J.S. & Harold, R.D. (1993). Parent involvement during the early adolescent years. *Teachers College Record, 94*(3), 568-587.

Elkind, D. (1979). Growing up faster. *Psychology Today, 60*, 180-186.

Epstein, J.L. (1984a). *Effects of teacher practices of parent involvement change in student achievement in reading and math.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Baltimore, MD.

Epstein, J.L. (1984b). School policy and parent involvement: Research results. *Educational Horizons, 62*, 70-72.

Epstein, J.L. (1986a). Parent involvement: Implications for limited-English-proficient parents. In C. Simich-Dudgeon (Ed.), *Issues of parent involvement and literacy.* Proceedings of the symposium held at Trinity College, Washington, DC.

Epstein, J.L. (1986b). Parents' reactions to teacher practices of parent involvement. *Elementary School Journal, 86*, 277-294.

Epstein, J.L. (1987a). Parent involvement: What research says to administrators. *Education and Urban Society, 19*, 119-136.

Epstein, J.L. (1987b). *Teacher's manual: Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS).* (Report P 61). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools.

Epstein, J.L. (1987c). Toward a theory of family-school connections: Teacher practices and parent involvement. In K. Hurrelmann, F. Kaufmann, & F. Losel (Eds.), *Social intervention: Potential and constraints* (pp. 121-136). New York: DeGruyter.

Epstein, J.L. (1988). How do we improve programs for parent involvement? *Educational Horizons, 66*(2) 58-59.

Epstein, J.L. (1989). Family structures and student motivation: A developmental perspective. In C. Ames & R. Ames (Eds.), *Research on motivation in education: Goals and cognitions* (pp. 259-295). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Epstein, J.L. (1991a). Effects on student achievement of teachers' practices of parent involvement. In S. Silbern (Ed.), *Advances in reading/language research, 5*, 261-276.

Epstein, J.L. (1991b). Paths to partnerships: What we can learn from federal, state, district, and school initiatives. *Phi Delta Kappan, 72*, 344-349.

Epstein, J.L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share, *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76, (9), pp. 701-712.

Epstein, J.L. & Becker, H.J. (1982). Teachers' reported practices of parent involvement: Problems and possibilities. *Elementary School Journal, 83,* 103-113.

Epstein, J.L. & Becker, H.J. (1987). *Hopkins surveys of schools and family connections: Questionnaires for teachers, parents, and students.* (Report P 81). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools.

Epstein, J.L. & Connors, L.J. (1993). *School and family partnerships in the middle grades*. United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Contract No. RR-91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Epstein, J.L. & Dauber, S.L. (1989a). *Evaluation of students' knowledge and attitudes in the Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) social studies and art program.* (CREMS Report No. 41). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools.

Epstein J.L. & Dauber, S.L. (1989b). *Teachers' attitudes and practices of parent involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools.

Epstein, J.L. & Herrick, S.C. (1990). *Implementing school and family partnerships in the middle grades: Three evaluations of summer home learning packets, school newsletters and orientation days.* (CDS Report 20). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students.

Epstein, J.L. & Herrick, S.C. (1991). *Reactions of parents and students to summer home learning packets in the middle grades.* (CDS Report 21). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students.

Epstein, J.L. & Salinas, K.C. (1991). *Promising practices in major academic subjects in the middle grades.* Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Epstein, J.L., Jackson, V., Salinas, K.C., with Calverton & West Baltimore Middle School Teachers. (1990). *Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) language arts and science/health interactive homework in the middle grades.* (Draft document). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, Center for Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students.

Gallup, A.M. & Elam, S.M. (1989). The 1989 Gallup poll of the public's attitude toward the public schools. *Phi Delta Kappan, 71,* 41.Gotts, E.E., and Purnell, R.F. (1984). *Evaluation of home-school communication strategies*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, New Orleans, LA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 244 376)

Griswold, P.A. (1986). *Parent involvement in unusually successful compensatory education.* Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 279 428)

Hamilton, M.A. & Cochran, M. (1988). *Parents, teachers, and the community: Building partnerships for the child.* Ithaca, NY: New York State College of Human Ecology.

Heath, S.B. & Mc Laughlin, M.W. (1987). A child resource policy: Moving beyond dependence on school and family. *Phi Delta Kappan, 68,* 576 580.

Helton, G.B. & Oakland, T.D. (1977). Teachers' attitudinal responses to differing characteristics of elementary school students. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 69,* 261-266.

Henderson, A.T. (1986). *Beyond the bake sale: An educator's guide to working with parents.* Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Henderson, A.T. (1987). *The evidence continues to grow: Parent involvement improves student achievement.* Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Henderson, A.T. (1988a). Good news: An ecologically balanced approach to academic improvement. *Educational Horizons, 66,* 60-62.

Henderson, A.T. (1988b). Parents are a school's best friend. *Phi Delta Kappan, 69,* 148-53.

Henderson, A. T. & Berla, N. (1994). *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement.* Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Henderson, A.T. & Marburger, C.L. (1990). *A workbook on parent involvement for district leaders.* Columbia, MD: The National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Henderson, P. (1987). *Parental involvement (Los Padres Participan): Encouraging parent involvement through ESL, bilingual parent-teacher workshops, computer literacy classes, and the bilingual adult evening school program.* New York: New York City Board of Education Office of Bilingual Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 285 400)

Herman, J.L. & Yeh, J.P. (1983). Some effects of parent involvement in schools. *Urban Review, 15*(1), 11-17.

Holliday, B. (1985). Towards a model of teacher-child transactional process affecting black children's academic achievement. In M. Spencer, G. Brookins, & W. Allen (Eds.), *Beginnings: The social and affective development of black children.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Home and School Institute. (1988). *New Partnerships in student achievement.* Washington, DC: Home and School Institute.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., Bassler, O.C., & Brissie, J.S. (1987). Parent involvement: Contributions of teacher efficacy, school socioeconomic status, and other school characteristics. *American Educational Research Journal, 24,* 417-435

Jacob, J. (1983). *Parent involvement. Remarks* Paper presented at the meeting of the National Forum on Excellence in Education, Indianapolis, IN. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 241 175)

Jennings, L. (1990). Parents as partners: Reaching out to families to help students learn. *Education Week*, August 1.

Jones, L.T. (1991). *Strategies for involving parents in their child's education*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

Lareau, A. (1987). Social class differences in family-school relationships: The importance of cultural capital. *Sociology of Education, 60,* 73-85.

Leler, H. (1983). Parent education and involvement in relation to the schools and to parents of school-aged children. In R. Haskins and D. Adams (Eds.), *Parent Education and Public Policy*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Leitch, M.L. & Tangri, S.S. (1988). Barriers to home-school collaboration. *Educational Horizons, 66,* 70-74.

Lightfoot, S.L. (1975). Families and schools: Creative conflict or negative dissonance. *Journal of Research and Development in Education, 9*(1), 34-43.

Lindner, B. (1987). *Family diversity and school policy*. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

Lipsitz, J. (1984). *Successful schools for young adolescents.* New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books.

Lyons, P., Robbins A.L. & Smith, A. (1983). *Involving Parents in Schools*. Ypsilanti, MI: The High Scope Press.

Lynn, L. (1984). Building parent involvement. Brief No. 8, Center on Organizing and Restructuring of Schools. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin.

Maccoby, E. (1984). Middle childhood in the contest of the family. In W.A. Collins (Ed.), *Development during middle childhood: The years from 6-12.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

McCormick, K. (1989). *An equal chance: Educating at-risk children to succeed.* Alexandria, VA: National School Boards Association.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

McLaughlin, M.W. and Shields, P.M. (1986). *Involving parents in the schools: Lessons for policy.* Washington, DC: Designs for Compensatory Education, Conference Proceedings and Papers. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 293 290)

McLaughlin, M.W. and Shields, P.M. (1987). Involving low-income parents in the schools: A role for policy? *Phi Delta Kappan, 69*, 156-60.

Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. (1987). *The American teacher, 1987: Strengthening links between home and school.* New York: Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.

Moles, O. C. (1987). Who wants parent involvement? Interest, skills, and opportunities among parents and educators. *Education and Urban Society, 19,* 137-145.

Moles, O.C. (1990). Effective parent outreach strategies. Paper prepared for parent involvement seminars, California State Department of Education.

Moles, O.C. (1991). School performance of children from one-parent families. In M. Bloom (Ed.), *Changing lives.* Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.

Nardine, F.E., Chapman, W.K, & Moles, O.C. (1989). *How involved are state education agencies in parent involvement?* [Report No. 17]. Boston: Institute for Responsive Education.

Nardine, F.E. and Morris, R.D. (1991). Parent involvement in the states: How firm is the commitment? *Phi Delta Kappan, 72,* 363-366.

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education. (1990). *Developing family/school partnerships: Guidelines for schools and school districts*. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

National Commission on Children. (1991). *Speaking of kids: A national survey of children and parents*. Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data.

National School Board Association. (1988). *First teachers: Parent involvement in the public schools*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

New York School Boards Association. (1987). *Home school partnership: School boards and parents. A position paper*. Albany, NY: Author. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 290 206)

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (1990). *Effective schooling practices: A research synthesis, 1990 update.* Portland, OR: Author.

Oakes, J. & Lipton, M. (1990). *Making the best of schools: A handbook for parents, teachers, and policymakers.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Peterson, A.C. (1986). *Early adolescence: A critical developmental transition?* Presentation at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Miami, FL.

Peterson, D. (1989). *Parent involvement in the educational process.* Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management.

Pickarts, E. & Fargo, J. (1975). *Parent education: Toward parental competence.* New York: Meredith Corporation.

Purkey, S.C. & Smith, M.S. (1983). Effective schools--A review. *Elementary School Journal, 83,* 427-452.

Purnell, R.F. and Gotts, E.E. (1985). *Preparation and role of school personnel for effective school-family relations.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 262 000)

Rich, D. (1985). *The forgotten factor in school success: The family.* Washington, DC: Home and School Institute.

Rich, D. (1986a). The community gap in education. *PE Forum*, April, 2-3.

Rich, D. (1987a). *Schools and families: Issues and actions*. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Rood, M. (1988). *A new look at student achievement: Critical issues in student achievement.* Paper #2. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Ruble, D.N. (1980). A developmental perspective on theories of motivation. In L.J. Lyons, Jr. (Ed.), *Achievement Motivation.* New York: Plenum.

Seeley, D.S. (1981). *Education through partnership: Mediating structures and education.* Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

Seginor, R. (1983). Parents' educational expectations and children's academic achievements: A literature review. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 29 (1),* issue 1-23.

Sigel, I.E., Dreyer, A.S., & McGillicuddy-Delisi, A.V. (1984). Psychological perspectives of the family. In R.D. Parke (Ed.), *Review of Child Development Research, 7.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Simich-Dudgeon, C. (1986). *Parent involvement and the education of limited English proficient students.* ERIC Digest, December. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics.

Simmons, R.G., Blyth, D.A., Van Cleave, E., & Bush, D. (1979). Entry into early adolescence. *American Sociological Review, 44,* 948-967.

Slaughter, D.T. & Epps, E.G. (1987). The home environment and academic achievement of Black American children and youth: An overview. *Journal of Negro Education, 86*(1), 3-20.

Smith, M.S. and O'Day, J. (1990). Systematic school reform: The politics of curriculum and testing.

Snider, W. (1990a). Parents as partners: Adding their voices to decisions on how schools are run. *Education Week*, November 21, 1990, 27-33.

Snider, W. (1990b). Role of parents in school decisions long debated. *Education Week,* November 21, 1990, 29.

Snider, W. (1990c). U.S. programs recognize parent contributions. *Education Week*, November 21, 1990, 33.

Solomon, Z. (1991). California state policy on parent involvement: Initiating a process for State Leadership. *Phi Delta Kappan, 72,* 359-362.

Stevenson, D. & Baker, D. (1987). The family-school relation and the child's school performance. *Child Development, 58,* 1348-1357.

Stipek, D.J. (1984). The development of achievement motivation. In R. Ames and C. Ames (Eds.), *Research on Motivation in Education*, 1. Orlando, FL: Academic Press.

Tangri, S. and Moles, O. (1987). Parents and the community. In V. Richardson-Koehler (Ed.), *Educator's Handbook* (pp.1-82). New York: Longman Press.

Taylor, B. & Levine, D. (1991). Effective schools projects and school-based management. *Phi Delta Kappan. 72,* 394-397.

Toomey, D. (1986). Home-school relations and inequality in education. Address at Conference on Education and the Family, Brigham Young University. In C. Ascher (Ed.), *Improving the school-home connection for poor and minority urban students.* ERIC/CUE Trends and Issues, 8. New York: Columbia University Teachers College.

Turning Points (1992). Involving families in middle schools. *The Principal, 71*(4), 49-50.

U.S. Department of Education. (1986). *What works: Research about teaching and learning.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

U.S. Department of Education. (1994). *Strong Families, Strong Schools*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Useem, E.L. (1990). *Social class and ability group placement in mathematics in the transition to seventh grade: The role of parent involvement.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston.

Walberg, H.J. (1984). Improving the productivity of America's schools. *Educational Leadership, 41,* 19-27.

Warner, I. (1991). Parents in touch: Indianapolis public schools' investment in family involvement. *Phi Delta Kappan, 72,* 372-375.

Williams, D.L. (1984). *Parent involvement in education: What a survey reveals.* Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 253 327)

Williams, D.L. & Chavkin, N.F. (1990). Essential elements of strong parent involvement programs. *Educational Leadership, 47,* 18-20.

Williams, D.L. & Stallworth, J. (1983/4). **Parent Involvement in Education Project,** Executive Summary of the Final Report. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Zeldin, S. (1989). *Perspectives on parent education: Implications from research and an evaluation of new partnerships for student achievement.* Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates.

Zeldin, S. (1990). Implementation of home-school-community partnership policies: Policy from the perspective of principals and teachers. *Equity and Choice, 6*(3), 56-67.

APPENDIX B

Bibliography of Current Products

APPENDIX B

Bibliography of Current Products

Adler, R., Anderson, B., Billig, S. H., D'Angelo, D., Dwyer, C., Harvell, C. & Rutheford, B. (1995). *Seven Themes of Middle Grade Parent, Family and Community Involvement*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Anderson, B., Rutherford, B., Billig, S., Livesay, M., Seppanen, P., Bernick, R., Swenson, C. & Brown, J. (1995). *Final Technical Report: Studies of Education Reform, Vol. III: Technical Appendix: Research Design and Methodology*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Anderson, B., Swenson, C., Rutherford, B. & Bernick, R. (1993). *Site Visitor's Notebook: Comprehensive Districtwide Parent and Community Involvement Programs*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Anderson, B., Swenson, C., & Livesay, M. (1993). *Site Visitor's Notebook: School Restructuring and Parent Involvement*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Anderson, B., Swenson, & Seppanen, P. (1993). *Site Visitor's Notebook: Adult-Child Learning Programs*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Bernick, R., Rutherford, B., Elliott, J. & Livesay, M. (1993). *School and Family Conferences in the Middle Grades*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Bernick, R., Livesay, M. & Rutherford, B. (1993). *Parent and Community Involvement in the Middle Grades: Recommended Case Study Sites*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Bernick, R. & Rutherford, B. (1994). *Connecting School•Family•Community Resources*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

RMC Research Corporation. (1992). *Parent and Community Involvement in the Middle Grades: Commissioned Papers*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

RMC Research Corporation. (1992). *Parent and Community Involvement in the Middle Grades: A Working Conference*. Proceedings of the National Conference, June 18-19, 1992. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Rutherford, B. (Ed.). (1995). *Creating Family/School Partnerships*. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.

Rutherford, B., Anderson, B., & Billig, S. (1995). *Final Technical Report: Studies of Education Reform, Vol. I: Findings and Conclusions*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Rutherford, B., Anderson, B., Billig, S., Livesay, M., Seppanen, P., Bernick, R., Swenson, C. & Brown, J. (1995). *Final Technical Report: Studies of Education Reform, Vol. II: Case Studies*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Rutherford, B., Bernick, R., Livesay, M. & Seppanen, P. (1993). *Parent and Community Involvement in the Middle Grades: Site Visit Documents*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Rutherford, B., Billig, S.H. & Kettering, J. (1992). *Creating School/Family Partnerships: Literature Review*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Rutherford, B., Livesay, M., Seppanen, P. & Bernick, R. (1993). *Parent and Community Involvement in the Middle Grades: Research Plan*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.

Rutherford, B. & Seppanen, P. (1993). ***Parent and Community Involvement in the Middle Grades: Dissemination Plan***. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research, United States Department of Education, Contract No. RR91-1720.08. Denver, CO: RMC Research Corporation.